THE

# Third Consultation On Internal Unity

OF

*The Christian Churches*

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## FOREWORD

The Third Consultation on Internal Unity of Christian Churches was held at the Wheeling Avenue Christian Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, February 27-March 1, 1962. This mass meeting was the outgrowth of two other such meetings in Wichita, Kansas, and a small invitational meeting of interested and concerned leaders which had met in the fall of 1961 at Lake Carl Blackwell near Stillwater, Oklahoma to explore internal unity farther and plan for the Tulsa conference.

The following report attempts to give the heart of the Tulsa consultation. In order to keep the size of the booklet within reasonable limits the discussion reports have been eliminated. (The editor hopes that the major presentations will promote similar discussions among readers).

This report is sent forth with a prayer that fruitful interaction between those holding differing positions may result and that, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, there may be more internal unity manifested by a people devoted to the manifestation of Christian unity by divided Christendom.

Charles R. Gresham,
Editor.

## "THE COMMUNITY OF THE SAINTS"

### (Bible Lectures)

### W. Carl Ketchenside

I

It is a genuine privilege to be able to greet you tonight in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I feel profoundly honored and profoundly humble that I have been invited to address you upon this occasion. And, irrespective of your personal views about the ecumenical movement, I am sure you are practicing the general principles of ecumenicity in inviting one of the non-instrument segment of the Disciple Brotherhood to address you upon this occasion. I very much regret the fact that we have to distinguish between ourselves as instrumental and non-instrumental brethren, but I think, at that, it is a little better way of doing it than to talk about the "organic" and "inorganic" brethren. While we are talking about the ecumenical movement I would like to say that, in these forums which Seth mentioned and which we have been conducting throughout the United States and Canada on the general subject of the unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, I have always allowed a question period exceeding the amount of time that I have invested in my speeches. However, I was startled not very long ago to have a brother sitting back at about the third row rise up and say, "Brother Ketcherside, how do you feel about the new economical movement in the churches?" And I could tell he was in favor of anything that had to do with economy in the churches.

It is a real privilege to address you tonight, and if God wills, upon the succeeding occasions upon the subject, "The Community of Saints." So that we shall not lose any time in this study of God's word, I should like to lay down five premises which will form the basis upon which we shall base our study and conclusions.

1. The 39 Books from Genesis to Malachi do not constitute the Old Testament or Covenant of God. They contain in brief compass a statement of the covenant about which the greater part of these books were written, or about a covenant people. The covenant which established relationship was one thing and the Scriptures or writings which grew out of that covenant were a wholly different thing.

2. The 27 books from Matthew to Revelation do not constitute the New Testament. The New Covenant which God declared He would make was not written with pen and ink at all. It was never addressed to A church nor addressed to THE church, and thousands entered into covenant relationship with God years before one word of the New Covenant scripture was penned. The New Covenant is one thing, the scriptures or writings which grew out of it are a wholly different thing.

3. The message of heaven calculated to enrol aliens under the sovereignty of Jesus Christ was referred to as the good news or the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was never addressed to citizens of the kingdom of God. It was good news, not a course of instruction. Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and the rest of the New Testament epistles are not a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are not a part of the New Covenant, but they are letters written to a covenant people when conditions demanded and circumstances warranted it.

4. A proper response to good news demanded belief of but one fact, that Jesus is the Messiah and God's Son. The man who reformed his life because of the implications of this proclamation and was baptized to fulfill the righteousness of God was thereby inducted into the reign of heaven.

5. The ECCLESIA of God on earth is composed of all who sustain a covenant relationship with God having had their sins washed away by the blood of Jesus and enjoying the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The church of God as the family of God is a fellowship. It is a fellowship of the elect ones or the called saints. Everyone who has been born again is a member of that family and is a brother to every other person in it. The church of God is a covental community of saints. And if we are to retain the word church as a translation of the word ECCLESIA, (I think it is a very improper translation of it, and I think it is a word that could well be dropped from our vocabulary because of its ecclesastical connotation, and because the actual word church came from a totally different Greek word than the word ecclesia, to begin with). But if we are going to retain the word church as a translation of the term ECCLESIA then there is now only one church on earth, there never was more than one, and there never will be more than one. It is just as impossible for a man to create a church (if we are to retain that term) as it would be for him to create a God.

Now these are a few of the bases upon which I shall proceed to reason in the days that lie ahead of us. And I invite your careful attention first of all to the fact that God has revealed himself to mankind in the sacred Scriptures. The Scriptures are not an account of man's discovery of God, but they are an account of God's uncovering Himself to man. The very word revelation means "to lay bare," "to make naked," "to uncover." So the Revelation of God is an uncovering of God to man and not a discovery of God by man. It is an account of God's speaking for man, and not of man's search for God. And in the sacred scriptures we have revealed unto us the manner and method by which God and man come into agreement and by which they sustain fellowship. And just at this juncture I should lay down two premises which I believe can be sustained by all of us who respect and reverence the Scriptures of God. First, that in His dealing with humanity God reveals Himself from the very beginning as being a covenant-making personality. Now why He has done so it is impossible for me to say. One thing I am certain of and that is that there is something about the nature of the Deity and something about the nature of humanity that requires, in order for these two to be brought together in a functional relationship, that God reveal Himself as a covenant making God. I would like to say, however, that there is a great difference in the covenants which God makes with mankind and in the covenants men make with each other. In the covenants which men make with each other it is understood that the two covenantees are upon an equality. But in the covenant which God makes with man, God alone has the right to decree the terms and man must be the acceptor of those terms. It is not because of an equality between the two members that God Himself enters into a covenant, but because this is the only means by which the purpose of God can be implemented in the hearts and minds of mankind. Let me repeat again, that in His dealings with humanity God reveals himself as a covenant making personality.

Second, the blessings and privileges bestowed upon man by such covenants can be enjoyed by them only in conjunction with ordinances of divine appointment. Now there is a great deal, of course, that grows out of this; and because my time is so limited among you and because I expect to stay within the time limits assigned and because I am fully anticipating that I shall receive more from your association than you receive from my expositions and explanations( because I am not here so much to help you as I am here to benefit by you and by our contacts), we must pass on very hastily just mentioning certain points. The history of humanity records for us two great interpositions of God in the affairs of men. I might say that I regard history as being nothing more or less than an account of the footprints of God in the life of mankind. And there are two outstanding acts in which God has intervened in the affairs of mankind. One of these we call the Flood, or the World Deluge, and the other is the Incarnation. Now strangely enough it was in conjunction with this first great act that God made His first recorded covenant and it is in connection with the second that God made His second great covenant; that one in which we are most concerned. We are indirectly concerned, of course, in the first. Now the first one of these great events—that of the World Deuge—according to the word of God acts as a constant rebuke to those skeptics who deny the possibility of the termination of present world order, based upon the false assumption of the continuity of the natural realm since creation. Over in II Peter we find that the record speaks to us in chapter three beginning with verse three: "You must understand this, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing following their own passions." (And may I suggest to you that most scoffers with whom I have come in contact always seek to justify their own conduct and their own passions.) The record says that these shall come, saying, "where is the promise of His coming. For ever since the fathers fell asleep all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation." This indicates to us that such individuals base their belief that there will never be a coming of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the continuity of the natural realm since creation. But the Book says that they are deliberately ignorant of one thing; they deliberately ignore this fact, "that by the word of God the Heaven's existed long ago and an earth formed out of water and by means of water through which the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and the destruction of ungodly men." Let me repeat, then, that the first great interposition of God in human affairs was enacted in order that the world in the decades yet to come might be constantly aware of the fact that this earth can be terminated by the power of God. I do not personally think that this world order will be terminated by some maniac who, without thought, presses a button. This world came into existence by the power of God and it will go out of evistence by the power of God. I am no more worried about some maniac pressing a button that will throw a switch that will cause mankind to be plunged into that state which he has not yet endured, than I am to believe that such a maniac could create the world in the first place.

The second great interposition — that of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ in which God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself—changed the calendar, and time stood still, and then it resumed again with a completely new mission. Remember then that the first recorded covenant came about with the cessation of the deluge. God made a covenant with Noah and with his family and with every creeping thing upon the earth in which was the breath of life. And the last was made with the advent of the Messiah. I think it would be well for us to contrast these two covenants. In the Flood we have

revealed the wrath of God; in the coming of Jesus to the world we have revealed the love of God. God met a sinful human family by love at the cross, and we meet God as sinners by faith at the same place. The first interposition of God in the affairs of humanity to disrupt their regularity was for the purpose of visiting destruction upon them; but the last was for the purpose of visiting salvation upon them. The first was in order to terminate life; the last was to grant that life more abundantly, for Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." The first covenant that was made with mankind which was recorded was made through a comforter. You will remember that Lamech, the father of Noah, at the time of the birth of his son said that "we shall call his name Noah because this same shall comfort us in our sorrow." So the word Noah means means Comforter. And the last covenant that God made with the human family was made through a Comforter, a divine Comforter, the Holy Spirit. Prior to the time that Jesus left this earth He spoke to his sorrowing disciples gathered in a weeping clump about him. He told them, "You believe in God believe also in Me." He declared: "In my father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also." This meant that there was to be an interim in which He was to be absent from those who loved Him on the earth, but He said to them in conjunction with that, "I will not leave you orphans, (as the Greek word has it); I will send you another comforter" (and the word "another" should be studied in the Greek because of its implications). "I will send you another comforter," and He identified that comforter as the Holy Spirit. So it is in conjunction then with the Great Comforter that the last covenant of God has been made to man. Because of the covenant that was made in the beginning as recorded for us in the book of Genesis, chapters six through nine, we need never again fear that this earth in which we live will be destroyed with a flood of water. But because of the second covenant that God has made with man we need never fear the second death. For that covenant is based upon the presumption that those who enter into this relationship do it by a new birth. And may I suggest to you that if anything is clearly taught in the Word of God it is taught that responsible beings who are born once will die twice. But responsible beings who are born twice need only die once. And the purpose of God in this is to make it possible for us to live with Him in fellowship. The first covenant that is recorded has its rainbow standing in the clouds of heaven, and the last covenant that God made has its rainbow round about the throne according to Revelation, 4:3. Now most of us, I am sure, recognize that the rainbow is a symbol, and in the very dawn of God's covenant-making work with mankind the rainbow was given as a sign of hope. And may I suggest to you tonight that not only as we gaze upon the rainbow that spans the clouds after the storm can we have hope of the fulfillment of God's promise with reference to the world deluge, but as we think about the rainbow round about Him that sat upon the throne of glory we can be thoroughly satisfied in our own hearts that we can have hope of life beyond this vale of tears.

Now God made other covenants with mankind in order to reveal to the world that He was truly a covenant making God. Eventually the time came that Noah's seed multiplied upon the earth, and once more, after the terrible deluge, there is the picking up again of the thread of human existence through which the Messiah was to be brought into the world. By the time of Abraham every other nation upon the face of the earth had chosen its own god; and, when they had done so, God Himself chose a nation. Since all nations must begin with one progenetor, God went over into the land of the Chaldeans and there in the city of Ur he selected Ab-

raham the son of Terah. Now Terah was already an idol worshipper, according to Joshua 24:4; and so God called upon Abraham, summoning him to leave his native land, his father's house and his family, and to go to a land that He would show him. I would like to suggest to you that God promised to Abraham even before he left this land that he would bless him, and Arbaham with full faith in the promises of God left the land. I am sorry to say that when he left he did not fulfill all the requirements, he took with him certain members of his family and especially Lot; and, as we trace their wanderings and perigrinations throughout the land of Canaan, we are reminded of the fact that it was not until Lot separated from Abraham that the book specifically says that the Lord spoke to Abraham after Lot had separated from him and said, "Now lift up your eyes and look North and South and East and West, for all this land I would give unto you."

I should like to point out that when God made His covenant with Abraham it was actually a dual covenant. It was both national and universal in its import. You will remember that the record says in Genesis that when God summoned Abraham to leave the Ur of the Chaldees, He said to him, "I will bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing. I will bless them that bless thee and curse them that curseth thee, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Now upon another occasion, in a repetition of this covenant, God declared that through the seed of Abraham all the nations of humanity would be blessed. So let me remind you then that God made two covenants with Abraham. In the first He was to bless the seed of Abraham by making them a nation, and in the second He was to bless all nations by the seed of Abraham. So the covenant made with Abraham was both fleshly and spiritual. The first conveyed a blessing to his seed, and the second a blessing through his seed. Now these two covenants, as all who are here tonight well know, eventually merged into two social institutions. One of these great social institutions was made up of those who constituted the people of God who had been called out of an earthly bondage; the other was to constitute the people of God who had been called out of slavery and serfdom of sin. One of these was introduced at Mt. Sinai with the leader and deliverer from physical bondage, Moses, as its mediator. It was ordained by the disposition of angels in the hands of this mediator. But the other was made at Mt. Zion with the leader and deliverer from spiritual bondage, God's own Son, and Jesus Christ our Lord, as mediator. So by virtue of covenant relationship, Abraham became the father of two families; one of these families was born of the flesh and the other was a family born of faith. It is essential in any study of God's covenantal relationship with the human family that we remember that these two families were distinct and separate one from another. I mention that because for a number of years the theology of the world was disturbed by the fact that man did not realize the dual nature of these covenants and confused them. One entered the relationship of Abraham and God by different processes under the first convenant than he did with the second. Now mark it down in the book of your remembrance that those of us who are here tonight and who are children of God are also children of Abraham. As a matter of fact, every one of us is a Jew in the sight of God tonight, if we are one of his children.

I get astonished at my brethren sometimes (and when I say my brethren I include all of you). I was down in Nashville, Tennessee, not very long ago and I was waiting for a plane late at night. I walked over to a tract rack and I selected a tract. It was purely negative (as most of our programs are, I think). The tract had on the face of it, on the front of it, these statements: "A church which is neither Catholic, Jewish or Protestant." I thought to myself, "How ridiculous." The church of which I am a member is composed of all three. The church of which I am a member is the catholic church. The church of which I

am a member is composed of Jews; and, as a matter of fact, those are the only people who do compose it because the record specifically says, that "he is not a Jew which is one in the flesh. He is a true Jew who has the circumcision upon his heart." Everybody in the church of which I am a member is a Jew; and not only that but of all the Protestant people upon the face of the earth I think we take the cake. As a matter of fact all that we have ever done is protest. So I suggest to our brethren that instead of taking a purely negativistic attitude toward everything, that they arouse and put out another booklet saying the church that is Catholic is composed of Jews and Protestants. Let the world see what it means to be a Christian once in a while.

Now I pass on, in dealing with this relationship that was created, to point out to you that the promised patrimony or inheritance under the covenant made with Abraham through the flesh was altogether different than the inheritance promised to the seed of Abraham by faith. I want to remind you that these are made participants of divergent covenants and therefore the token of the covenant relationship is not the same. The covenant in the flesh had a fleshly mark, and the covenant of the spirit had a spiritual token. One of these was imprinted on the body and the other one was written on the heart. And it is because it is written on the heart that the new covenant could never have been written with ink either upon tables of stone or upon paper. If anything is cleary taught in God's divine truth, it is taught that the new covenant which God has made with us is not written with paper and ink. Yet, this book which was called the New Testament Scripture was written with pen and ink and we have proof of it. You will remember that John in two epistles plainly declared that he had a lot of things to say which he would not write with paper and ink. Now since the new covenant was not written with paper and ink and since what John wrote was written with paper and ink, I conclude therefore that what John wrote was not a part of the new covenant. And it certainly was not a part of the gospel. Now you may say, "You bring certain strange things to our ears, and you seem to be setting forth a strange gospel." Let me pause long enough to assure you that everything I have said was said much better than I have said it by Alexander Campbell in the days of old. For if ever a man upon the face of the globe caught the distinctive difference between the gospel beyond Galeon of the Herald gospel Evangelion of the Herald and the didache, or the doctrine of the t e a c h e r, it was Alexander C a m p b e l l. And if ever a man could distinguish between preaching and teaching it was this man. If ever a man knew the difference and distinction between these two covenants it was this man. It is a rather strange thing to me that it was A. Campbell's Sermon on the Law in which he distinguished between these two covenants that caused all the furor in his day; and yet some of us who are legal descendants of A. Campbell in these days rise up in arms when somebody still makes a distinction between the Law and the Gospel.

Tomorrow morning, God willing, we shall begin with the covenant of Abraham and pursue it further and find out eventually what it means to be a member of the covenant community of the saints.

Before we pass on from the stage, let me remind you once more that the sacred Scriptures teach us that our relationship with God is based upon a covenant made by God and confirmed through the Lord Jesus Christ. And that those of us who are going to enjoy the privileges, the blessings and the prerogatives that are conferred by this covenant must do it upon the basis of ordinances which have been ordained by God. What that covenant is and what those ordinances are remains for another time and another talk. Thank you so much and God bless you every one.

## KETCHERSIDE LECTURE II

Again, it is a very rare privilege to be able to greet you here in Tulsa in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am certain of one thing, that I

should much rather be here hearing you discuss the possibility of internal unity than to discuss the probability of infernal division which has plagued us so often in the past. Not long ago somebody had a very good suggestion, but I suspect probably he was guilty of the sin of over-simplification. He suggested that if all the dissident parties in the Restoration Brotherhood could get together and there write down in a book all the matters upon which they were in absolute agreement and then, following that, write an appendix and put in it all of the things over which they were divided, then simply have an operation, remove the appendix, we would all be one, and the body would be whole. I hold personally that love, joy and peace are fruits of the Holy Spirit, and that, in view of that fact, peace is not something to be arranged or achieved, but it is something to be accepted. I think that the whole problem lies perhaps in the fact that through the years we have placed less emphasis upon the Spirit and, by virtue of that fact, the Spirit has not found it possible to work through us as He should. The truth of it is, brethren, we cannot open doors; but when the Spirit opens up great doors and effectual, we must hold them open, and not slam them shut in His face. We must cultivate the grace of the Spirit if we are going to be guided by the Spirit of grace. Or to put it another way, we cannot have the unity of the Spirit until we first recapture the spirit of unity. Among many with whom I have been associated through the years, it is tragically true that we have manifested the will to divide rather than the will to unite; and until we capture that will, so that we may be instruments of the Spirit who can use us effectively to the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose upon earth, then we shall strive in vain as those who seek to build a house without God laboring with them.

In Romans 15:4 the Apostle Paul declares to us that "the things which were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Using that as a basis for my introduction this morning I propose to examine with you the old covenant that we may better understand the new. This afternoon, if God wills, we will point out to you again, in the words of Jeremiah, that God himself declared that the days would come when He would make a new covenant. And He declared that this new covenant would not be like the one that he made in the days when He took His people by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, which covenant they broke. Now if it is true that the new covenant is not to be likened to the one that God made previously; then if we can understand something about the original one, we can understand something about the next and the last one, the one which establishes our personal relationship and Fellowship with God.

The first portion of the world's history was devoted to God selecting a family through which the Messiah was to be brought into existence, and following that was a period in which God developed a nation who was to give us the Messiah. When God got ready to declare that the nation of Israel was the selected vessel to receive His oracles and to keep alive the concept of monotheism in a polytheistic world, He found a great difficulty, of course, in the fact that up to this time these people had been nomadic in their lives. And you cannot build out of a nomadic, wandering group a solid nation. It was necessary therefore that, first of all, God burn out of them the wanderlust, and secondly, that He teach them the art of constructing cities so that they could establish a permanent culture and civilization. In order to do this, God led these people down into the land of Egypt which at that time was the outstanding civilization in the world. There he placed them in confinement; He kept them as serfs and slaves under the cruel lash of the taskmaster's whip. There he taught them to make brick and there because under the leadership of Joseph (who was appointed food administrator of Egypt at one time and who also was secretary of agriculture) because the Pha-

roah had developed a FHA program and likewise a crop control system that eventually as most crop control systems do, had brought the entire country under the head of the central government; and because the government itself appropriated that which the farmers raised and had to give back to them for a sum; it became necessary to build great treasury houses. (We call these corn-storage plants in America). The slaves were commanded to build these and the result was that they labored to construct Pithom and Raamses. Out of them God burnt the wanderlust to the extent that eventually a mediator and governor was sent back to lead them out, (a man who for a period of 40 years had been trained in the art of leading sheep, but who found out that that little qualified him to lead goats) deliver these people from bondage and take them out and out of them construct a nation. You are aware of the fact, I am sure, that when these people were free from bondage they were led out to the foot of the same mountain where the burning bush indicated to Moses that he was to be their deliverer. This mountain, smoking around its summit, and with the lightening flashing, and the thunders rolling and reverberating amidst its crags, formed the rostrum from which God personally addressed these people. But they were so frightened by the voice that spoke to them from heaven that they pleaded to Moses to go up and confer with God and bring unto them the wishes of God. That brings us to the place then where God establishes with them a covenant, and that covenant I want to briefly analyze with you this morning.

My thesis will be, with references to that covenant, that the 39 books that are commonly called the Old Testament do not constitute the old covenant or old testament at all. As a matter of fact we must remember that nowhere in all the sacred pages does God ever suggest that the holy Scriptures from Moses to Malachi constitute the Old Testament. No inspired writer ever hinted that the old covenant has 39 books. Instead of that we must recognize that these books were nothing more nor less than the history of a covenant people. Job, Psalm, Proverbs, Ecclesastes, and the Carticles represent the literature of a covenant people, represent the song book that a covenant people used in their temple service. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekal, Daniel and all the host of prophecies represent nothing more or less than the revelation of God to a covenant people. These are not a part of the covenant at all. The history of a covenant people is no more a part of their constitution than a book on American history is a part of the constitution of the United States of America.

Now, we must recognize that a nation is a social unit created when a number of clans or tribes associate themselves together for mutual progress and protection. And we must realize in order to achieve a nation that the first essential is a compact or agreement. Now such a compact is called a covenant or a constitution. We must also recognize that, when God constitutes a nation under himself, that nation is a theocracy and God himself must announce the terms of relationship. And thus we have God giving what our Jewish friends call the Torah which in reality was the covenant that was made at Mt. Sinai.

I should like to have you think with me for just a moment about some of the implications of this old covenant which was to form the basis for the new, and yet in other ways was to be so greatly different. In the 20th chapter of Exodus, beginning with verse 1 the record says, "And God spoke all these words saying, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Now this is the preamble to the constitution, and you will notice that this preamble began by stating the fact of what God had done for them. It is a strange thing that under no circumstances or conditions has God ever made a covenant with man in which He required anything of man except upon the basis of what He had previously done for man. This statement that I just read to you consti-

tutes the (kyrugma) as it were of the covenant, and what follows in the old covenant Scriptures which grew out of this (kyrugma) or announcement that was made to them was nothing more or less than the didache or the doctrine (or the teaching) that was a part of the relationship of these to God. Remember, then, that this statement "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," was given for the purpose of identifying the God who had created this nation, and identifying that nation as the one He had created. This was the God who led a people out of Egypt; this was the people who were led out of Egypt, who were taken out of the house of bondage.

Now we must recognize that the basic code that is laid down here has to do with the fulness of religion because religion is that which binds man back to God. And since there is two things that are necessary—a relationship to the deity and relationship to the humanity that the deity has created—it is quite obvious that the constitution would have to embrace the responsibility to both. So we have four words or four commandments here that are definitely related to the responsibility to the Deity, and then we have six that are just as obviously related to the responsibility to humanity. Now I am sure that this is rather arbitrary means of separation, because it is still true that your responsibility to humanity is a part of your responsibility to Deity, and it cannot be separated in such well defined terms even though sometimes we attempt to do it.

Now let it be understood that the covenant that God made with these people was what was written on two tables of stone. All previous writings and all subsequent writings in the Old Testament Scriptures are not a part of this covenant. If anything is clearly set forth in the Old Covenant Scriptures themselves, then this is clearly made known. There is a distinctive difference between the covenant that establishes the relationship with God and the implications of this covenant that grew out of it and are contained for us in the rest of the Old Covenant Scriptures.

Let me suggest to you (since this will be vital to the things that I shall say this afternoon) the reason why I affirm this. First of all, we shall call the mediator himself to testify; and as we introduce Moses here to the witness stand I turn to Exodus 34 and I find in verses 27 and 28 this statement; "And the Lord said to Moses, write these words; in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel. And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread or drank water, and he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments." Now thirty-eight years later, when Moses stood near Kadesh-Barnea, he rehearsed the words of this covenant to the people; and upon that occasion he reiterated the same thing that is said here. Thus I turn with you to Deuteronomy, which contains for us his rehearshal of the Law. In chapter 4 of the book of Dueteronomy in verses 11 to 13 we have this statement, "And he declared to you his covenant which he commanded you to perform; that is the ten commandments, and he wrote them upon 2 tables of stone." Now again in chapter five of the book of Deuteronommy this was made quite clear. Here Moses proves to us that what had transpired before and had been written before, was not a part of the covenant, and what was written subsequently was not a part of the covenant of God. Beginning with verse one, "And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I speak in your hearing this day, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb, not with our fathers did the Lord make this covenant but with us who are all of us here alive this day." Now this completely eliminates any thing that had been written prior to this time in the first 39 books of the Old Covenant Scriptures as being a part of this covenant. The covenant was not made with those who had preceded it. It

was made with those who were there alive and present that day. Let us turn then to the conclusion of this, Moses rehearses the 10 commandments, mentioning them one by one, and then he says (in verse 22), "These words the Lord spoke to all of your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud and the deep gloom with a loud voice and he added no more; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone and gave them to me."

The Lord made a covenant; that covenant consisted of 10 commandments; it was inscribed upon two tables of stone; and having made this covenant the Lord added no more. Now my brethren have been a little more generous that the Lord. They have added about 37½ other books to it, and called that the old covenant and the Old Testament but God nowhere did so.

I should like to advance five reasons this morning why I suggest to you that the rest of the Old covenant scriptures cannot in any sense be a part of this covenant. In the first place, the two tables of stone are distinctly said to be the tables of the covenant, (Deut. 9:11). The covenant is identified here as well as every other place with what was inscribed by the finger of God upon these two sacred stones. In the second place, the sacred chest or coffer in which these stones were carried was called the Ark of the Covenant (Numbers 10:33; Deut. 10:8, and numerous other places). Now this ark of the Covenant had disappeared long before Ezra Nehemiah, Esther, Malachi and Zachariah were all written. So the very Ark of the Covenant that contained the covenant had itself long disappeared before these books were written. It is obvious that Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Malachi and the rest of the Old Testament look, by no stretch of im- Testament books, by no stretch of imagination, can be made a part of this covenant. Third, the covenant is distinctly said to have been given in Horeb (Deut. 5:2), and Paul identified this as Mt. Sinai in Arabia (Gal. 4:25); but the Scriptures were all written in Palestine Babylon or in Persia, and therefore could not have been a part of the covenant which was distinctly said to have been made in Horeb at Mt. Sinai in Arabia. Fourth, the covenant was said to be made when God took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt (Jer. 31:32), but the scriptures were all written at other times and in many other places. Fifth, the prophecy of Jeremiah could not possibly be a part of the testament for the people had already broken the covenant before Jedemiah wrote; and Jeremiah wrote because they had broken it, declaring that the time was coming when God would make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

Now you say, what is the difference? The difference is just this, because we have made this mistake with reference to the old covenant, we have made the same mistake with reference to the new. We have concluded that, because man has applied the term New Testament to all of the letters that were written by Paul, by Peter and by others as well as to the account written by Luke, all of these are a part of God's covenant with us. The truth of it is that none of them are a part of God's covenant with us. The new covenant of God is distinctly different from the old as we shall find in our succeeding studies. The old covenant was written upon two tables of stone; the new covenant was written upon men's hearts. The old covenant was written by the finger of God; the new covenant has been written by the finger of God. What is the finger of God? At the time when the Pharisees criticized Jesus because of the miracles that he performed, when they ridiculed his acts and declared that he was doing this by the power of Beelszbub, Jesus plainly declared: "If I by the finger of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come night unto you." He identifies the finger of God as the Holy Spirit of God. The same finger of God that wrote the 10 commandments and made the first covenant is the same finger of God, the Holy Spirit, which has engraved upon human hearts the new covenant or the new agreement.

Then what is the book of Acts?

The Book of Acts is not the history of the church, as I used to think. The book of Acts is not the history of a covenant people. The book of the Acts of the Apostles is the struggle of a message, born by the covenant people, to be free. To be free from the Judiasing influence that would have made out of the ECCLESIA of God a narrow Jewish sect. The Book of Acts is the only book in the Bible that ends with an adverb, and it ends with an adverb at a very inopportune time for those of us who used to think of it as a history of the ECCLESIA. It ends with an adverb because it ends when that message is free ("and Paul dwelt two whole years in his own house preaching the word of God and teaching all who came unto him, no man hindering.)" When Luke finds the man imprisoned, but the message free, he closes his book. So the book of Acts is not the history of the church, there are too many gaps in it. The book of Acts is the history of a message born by a covenant people to a dying world in order that that message might be free. What about Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and all of the rest of the New Covenant Scripture. These are not a part of the new covenant. These are letters addressed to people who were in the covenant. They are letters addressed to a covenant people telling them how to behave themselves in the house of God. They are no more a part of the new covenant than Zachariah and Jeremiah are a part of the old.

These books, then, are not a part of the gospel; they are part of the didache. What difference does that make? It makes this great difference: God has established a fellowship based upon faith in a person, and those who come into that relationship are then obligated, having enrolled in the school of Christ, to study and to learn and to bring their lives in harmony with the life and the ethics and the morals of Him whom they have obeyed. There can be no room for difference as to faith. There are great areas of difference in all matters of teaching and education, for one can embrace the Christ with the first impact of that message upon his heart and his first encounter with him upon his own Damascus Road. But the matter of learning to be a Christian is a day by day task in the school of the Christ, and in that there are no doctors, and there are no teachers, there are only disciples. For all of us are learners. "And there is no teacher but one. Call no man on earth your teacher for there is one teacher." And regardless of how much scholastic ability we maintain, or how many degrees we may earn as men my bestow them, in the final analysis as we approach the new covenant Scriptures and learn how to behave ourselves in the house of God, the teacher who stands before the class and those who sit in the pew are equal before the Master. But all of them are still learners and obligated to change and amend their lives day by day as they find more of what He would have them do. It is upon that basis—God willing, granting that our lives shall be spared and that our Master tarries until this afternoon—that I shall analyze with you the implications of the new covenant. Thank you and God bless you.

## KETCHERSIDE LECTURE III

I find myself in a rather enviable position, I think, during this particular investigation. I still think it is very wonderful of you and very gracious of you to invite someone from the non-instrument wing or segment or fragment or splinter (all these terms have been used at various times.) I think it very gracious of you to invite me to come and to speak to you briefly, so that I can listen in to you at length. I find it wholly possible as I sit here to cooperate with the "independents" and be independent with the "cooperatives." I have long ago learned one thing about my circulation among brethren; and that is that those who have been dubbed "liberal" are very conservative about a lot of things. And those who have been called "conservative" are very liberal on a lot of other things. The result is that they keep me constantly mixed up. I am not too sure whether I am a liberal "conservative," or a conserv-

ative "liberal." And, incidentally, a lot of other brethren are mixed up, too, on where to place me. I think it is good when you have at least one man that you do not know where to put him, and I hope to continue to stay in that particular field.

One of the grandest things that has happened to me in recent years has been to learn that harmony is not essential to fellowship, but that fellowship is essential to the attainment of harmony. Harmony is a goal for which we strive, and fellowship is a state into which we are called. "God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his son, Jesus Christ." There is not a single thing that was written in the new covenant scriptures with reference to the achievment or the attainment of unity or harmony that was not written to people who were already in the fellowship. Not one time did any apostle ever write one word to members of the body of Christ with reference to bringing them into the fellowship. Everything was written to them because they were in the fellowship, and it has helped me greatly to realize that it is not necessary for me to agree with everything I hear in order to be in fellowship with my brethren.

Not very long ago I was speaking over in Indiana. I happened to be talking on the subject of fellowship and Christian unity, and there was a young preacher who had just come up from the Southland who was sitting down in front on the very first seat. He heard that there was to be a question period following, and I could see that he was getting very nervous for fear that there would not be enough time for questions. He was screwing around in his seat and looking pretty much like I would imagine a bumble bee would in a gallon jug waiting for the time to ask his question. So just as soon as I said I would pause now for queries, up went his hand, and he said," Now Bro. Ketcherside, I want to get this straight because I want to report you correctly. Do I understand you to say that you are in fellowship with people with whom you disagree?" I said that is the only kind I am in fellowship with, because there aren't any other kind.

Our problem has been, I think, to a great extent that we have slowed down what started out to be a very wonderful movement, and when a thing ceases to move it becomes a monument, and we can look upon it and pay tribute to our past successes without having to do anything to guarantee them in the future. One of the brethren from over in Great Britain sent me a letter last week and he enclosed in it a little statement: "Like a mighty tortoise moves the church of God. Brethren, we are sitting where our fathers trod." That reminded me of what somebody said, that our problem is that we have too many brethren who sing "Standing On the Promises" who are just "sitting on the premises." I think we need to recapture the sense of movement; we need to recapture the sense of activity in order that we may bring to bear a witness on the world. Perhaps our problem, though, was brought forth by Bro. Owens this morning in his rather memorable address and especially in the questions he asked. I am confident that if we attempted to answer them that this conference would extend some time into next year, but as he was asking those questions there kept going thru my mind a litte statement inside one of the girls' booth who works in the bank where we go occasionally to borrow money. It says, "We Know All the Answers, We Just Do Not Understand All the Questions." Perhaps that is our trouble, and now Bro. Owens has complicated it by asking a lot more.

Well, in any event, it is a wonderthing to be here with you and to share with you an occasion like this. I guess that the very fact that I am here and the very fact that you allow me to be here, is a good indication that there are certain changes that are taking place which we hope are for the better. Actually I do believe, in spite of all the problems that we confront today, that the Holy Spirit is on the hearts and minds of all the brethren and all the various segments throughout the country. I think that we must recognize that there will al-

ways be forces of action and there will also be forces of reaction. And we must face up to the fact that these are problems that we have to live with for a while, and the settlement of them is not going to be easy. But I want to say one thing to you personally: the fact that you come together and discuss as you have discussed thus far and hold the door open instead of slamming it shut in the Spirit's face is to me a very wonderful symtom of better things to come. And if we never settle all of the problems that we confront upon this earth, if we have to take some of them to the judgment bar of God and there allow Jesus Christ to settle them for eternity; there is one thing I do know, and that is if we refuse to love our brethren (and by that I mean all of our brethren and all of God's children), the situation is going to be settled so far as we are concerned regardless of the issues that are between us.

I think that we need to face up really and squarely and honestly to the fact that we are brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ. You are my brothers. You are not my brothers because we agree. I do not have the right to choose my brothers in the Lord any more than I have the right to choose my brothers in the flesh. You are my brothers, not because of the fact that I selected you or you selected me, but you are my brothers because we have the same parent. There is one Father for us all, and Jerusalem which is from above is the Mother of us all. I happen to have been the oldest member of my father's family, and I recall that when my brother Rudolph was born (we were Danes so you will understand these names, Wilhelm, Karl and Rudolph,) they did not bring him around to me and ask if I wanted to keep him, I was stuck with him. And the same thing holds true with a lot of you, that is, that you are stuck with me. Now since we have the same parentage and it is upon that basis that we are members of the same family, I am going to recognize you all as my brothers and sisters in the Lord and I am grateful to him that I can do that.

I am glad that all of us are growing up to the place where it is possible for us to recognize that brethren can disagree without being disagreeable, and they can love each other in the Lord in spite of great divergencies of viewpoints and opinions. This to me is an evidence of maturity, and I think we have not given too much evidence of it in the past. If I be questioned as to the Scripture authority for saying this is an evidence of maturity, I point out to you that the Apostle Paul in I Cor. 3:1-3 declared that he had to speak unto them as babes and immature ones when they acted like we have always acted before. So, evidently then, if we have quit being babies we are growing up.

This afternoon I should like to address your attention and mine for just a few moments to a continuation of our study of the covenantal relationship. We are analyzing the old covenant as God gave it to his people. You will remember that I postulated the idea this morning that the covenant consisted of the Torah, as our Jewish friends refer to it; it consisted of the letters that were written upon 2 tables of stone by the finger of God. And I pointed out to you that in the same fashion the new covenant scriptures was written upon the human heart. Now the original covenant written upon two tables of stone by the finger of God was kept in a holy place called the sanctuary, and the new covenant of God has been written upon the heart that occupies the only sanctuary that God has upon this earth today. I want to pause long enough to say, and I hope you will forgive me for saying it, that when I travel about and brethren take me and show me their new meeting houses and they point out where they say the sanctuary is located, they are using the language of Judaism. Christianity has no sacred places, and it has no sacred days and it has no sacred rituals to be administered by a sacerdotal caste. The whole truth of it is that the only sanctuary that God has today is the human heart in which he dwells. There it is that the Holy

Spirit is enshrined and not in buildings. I think that we have made sad mistakes in the past in that we have called buildings churches and thus we have missed the whole connotation of the ECCLESIA. The church of God is either here seven days a week or it is not here any day of the week. If the church of God is not in existence when it is not in this house then it is not the church of God when it is in this house. And I think that we need to realize that we do not go to church, it is the church that does the going. The church is the ECCLESIA of God, the called out of God. It is the called out of God because each individual that comprises and composes it is a sanctury of the Living God, and in him the Holy Spirit dwells.

Now, as we explore this subject a little bit further, I want you to go back with me to Jeremiah 31. I think it would be well for us to recapture a wee bit of the background of this statement of hope that was made by the ancient prophet. In the first place, this was at a time when the ten tribes had been carried away. First of all, under Benhadad they had been harrassed and much of their property had been taken. Eventually under various of the Assyrian leaders these people had been desseminated until finally they were carried off and scattered on the other side of the river. There had been brought into the ten tribe territory representatives of the various nations under heaven, The Medes and others, and these had been scattered thru the territory that was formerly occupied by the ten tribes. However, the two tribe kingdom farther south had a continued existence although quite precarious, and at the time that we pick up this story, Jeremiah realizes that the sands are running out of the upper glass for his people. It is a time when the Krushchev of the day, Nebuchadnezzar, was surrounding these people to the north, and when it looked as if the Communism of that time, which was the attempted world domination by Babylon, would overflow the heritage of God. In such a moment as this when the hearts of people were filled with fear, Jeremiah spoke to them in this fashion: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, (I am reading now from Jer. 31:31) when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke though I was their husband, saith the Lord; but this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days says the Lord. I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be my people, and no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother saying, know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest, saith the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and will remember their sin no more." I think that we could well spend the entire time in an analysis of these very beautiful and wonderful words of promise. Notice first of all, that the record specifically says that "the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant." This indicates that the new covenant which God will make was not to be a continuation of nor a perpetuation of the previous covenant. The previous covenant was not to be revised or amended or to have a bill of rights tacked on the tail end of it; but instead of that, in nature, in purpose, method and results, the new covenant was to be distinctive and differentiated from the old. Now the second thing that is rather remarkable about this is that this covenant was to be made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. You are fully aware I am sure, that it was long, long ago (when, because of a heavy taxation program that was enforced by Solomon in the first great WPA project in the history of the world; a program that taxed the people out of existence and into extinction) that they came to the son of Solomon and asked to be relieved of the burden of their taxation. When he refused to allow them tax release and insisted that instead the income tax be reported regularly and increased to a great extent, the people revolted

and they went off to form the ten-tribe kingdom. Now there was constant warfare, there was considerable bickering back and forth and there was actual fratricidal strife in which the blood of these men were spilled upon the battlefields in the no-man's land that existed north of Judah and Benjamin. And so at this time Jeremiah speaks about this that has long ago come to pass. But notice he says that the new covenant is to be made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. This indicates that God is going to make a covenant that will be a unifying force. It is no longer to recognize the old divisions that previously existed. Those of a political nature, those of a racial nature, those of any other kind of nature would no longer be recognized. It was to be a covenant that was to be made with all the people of God and embrace all the people of God in one covenantal relationship. And since the division that existed between Judah and Israel was indicative of the state and condition then known, God uses this as a means of showing that this is to be a cohesive covenant that would weld together in one body all of his people. It would, in other words, destroy the very spirit of hostility and constitute a unifying force of all the chosen of God.

Now, the next thing I call to your attention is, that — it is specifically said that this is to be a covenant different than the one at Sinai. It was to be different in the fact that it was to have a different mediator. It was to be different in that it was to have a different purpose and it was to be validated by different blood. The old covenant was sealed by the blood of animals, the new covenant was to be sealed by the blood of the son of God. The first was a national covenant, that was written upon two tables of stone, it's central place of deposit was the sanctuary in a tabernacle made by men. But the second was an individual covenant made with individuals, not with a group, not with a congregation, not with a church, not with THE church, but it was to be an individual covenant in which the heart of the individual was made to be in tune with the heart of God thru the Holy Spirit that dwelt in the human heart. It was to be a covenant engraved on the human heart. "I will," says God in very plain terms, "I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts." So it was to be engraved on human heart, and the human heart as I previously said would be the only sanctuary or dwelling place of God.

Now, again, we notice that the first was written on two tables of stone, and this is a rather interesting thing that the statutes and the judgments and the law that grew out of this were written in a book by the original mediator. This is well understood. This was to serve as a guardian or tutor; it was to serve as someone who was to be a custodian for God's people until they could be brought to faith to Christ. Certainly you would not entrust your children to someone who was not mature and who was not able to take care of them. So it was essential that even the laws and statutes that were connected with and grew out of the first covenant should be given perfectly at first. In other words, it was a full-grown legalistic system from the very beginning and all of its laws were given at its inception. You are going to find, however, that the second covenant, the last covenant, was not a written code at all. It was not engraved on stone; it was not written with pen and ink; and there were no writings given in conjunction with it at all. As a matter of fact, the epistles that we have and to which we referred before were written only as circumstances demanded it. When the Apostle Paul baptized a runaway slave while he was in Rome in captivity in chains, he wrote out a baptismal certificate to the congregation that met in the home of his former master. And because in those days there were not so many motels as there are now he included in it the request for a room reservation which he expected soon to pick up. Now there is a great deal of difference between a legalistic code and a personal letter written to reserve a room and as a baptismal cer-

tificate for a former runaway slave. The congregation at Corinth became divided and the household of the faithful woman came over and mentioned the fact to Paul that they were torn into shreds. The congregation at Corinth was divided over two things: first of all, they were divided over the men who had special gifts, and secondly, they were divided over the special gift which men had in the first place. In the first place each one of them wanted to elevate a man who had a gift and in the second place each one of them wanted to elevate a gift which they hoped to have. The Apostle Paul had to write to them and correct the situation. They also had another aggravated condition there. There was a man who was engaged in such illicit sexual relationships that even the Gentiles themselves would make no boast about that, although, among the Gentiles in that day, such sexual discrepancies and life were very common and actually a part of their religious worship. Paul had to write to the congregation at Corinth and correct these things. Now if this condition had not happened Paul would not have written to Corinth at all. So he was not writing, as so many of us preach, to lay down the law to the brethren; but he was writing to them to correct certain things that existed among them, and very casually he said that the things that were uncorrected with reference to this I will take care of when I get there. I have often wondered how he took care of them. Would it not have been fine if he had told us that. But since this was not a legalistic program at all he did not spell it all out for us in that kind of way.

I am always interested in John. John, you know, was the apostle of love after having wanted originally to burn everybody that disagreed with him. We talk about John the Baptist having the spirit and power of Elijah, but it was the other John who really had the attitude of Elijah back in the days of old when Elijah and Elisha were confronted with opposition. You will remember that upon a certain occasion they invoked fire from heaven to destroy their enemies. (Much like some of our brethren, I think would like to pray today with reference to some of their brethren.) In any event, when John came back and found out that they would not let Jesus stay all night in town because he was headed for a city that they did not especially regard, he wanted to call fire down from heaven and destroy them. Later on under the gentle influence of the Master he learned better, and I like the way he writes. But you know as you read II John and as you read III John (the one addressed to the well-beloved Gaius and the other addressed to the elect lady,) you are interested in the fact that John concludes by saying I have a great many things that I would like to say to you but time is a little pressing to you right now, and I do not have time to put them down in pen and ink. And you know as I read II John and III John I keep wondering all the time what all those things were that he wanted to say, and I can't help but wish that he had written them because he certainly would have taken care of my curiosity as to what they were. I wonder if he might have been afraid somebody would read them. You know you have to be a little careful these days about writing because some of the brethren will get it and photostat your letter and mail it around. But, in any event, John exercised due caution even for his day, and set for us an example about writing letters now. (Be careful what you write with pen and ink. It might be a good idea to call them up long distance and tell them, the thing which poor John could do).

Now these letters, many of them, seem to have been written almost casually to tell people who were in covenant relationship what to do as members of the household of God. And yet you know, I think, that sometimes these days we miss this point completely. We forget that there is a distinction between kerugma which constituted the message of the herald for the alien world and that course of instruction which God gave us for these who have enlisted in the school of the Lord Jesus Christ. You may

ask, what difference does it make? Well, it makes a great deal of difference in this: the son of God himself prior to the time of his ascension, told his ambassadors or envoys to an alien world, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." He that believeth what? He that believeth the gospel; but unfortunately, a great many of the brethren with whom I have been associated cannot distinguish between gospel and doctrine and they think that the entire new covenant scripture composes the gospel. Therefore, you have got to believe and understand everything in the entire New Testament Scripture like they do or you cannot be saved. I say that one of the most critical errors in our thinking has been that we equate gospel with doctrine. We confuse the kerugma of the herald with the didache of the teacher. And we seek to bind upon men immediately what it has taken us 40 years to learn. It takes us 30 years to find out and we give it to them in 30 minutes, and, if they do not accept it exactly as we do, then they are out of the fellowship because we cannot stand to sit down by the side of those who do not see everything exactly as we do—who do not cross every T and dot every I exactly as we do it. We are not willing to allow people to grow in grace and in knowledge of the truth unless they grow more like us and do it spontaneously, automatically and almost immediately. Now this was never the intention of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The covenant grows out of the kerugma. The covenant is that relationship which each of us as individuals sustain with the Lord Jesus Christ.

That brings me to the place where I must say that under the new covenant relationship there is no such thing as a Biblical expression, "member of the church." The word doesn't occur anywhere within the new covenant Scriptures. Never once does any inspired writer ever talk about a member of the church. Now we use that expression today, and we use it in an organizational sense. We think about being a member of the church exactly like you are a member of the PTA, or a member of the Odd Fellows Lodge, or a member of the MFA. You become a member of any of these by subscribing to a certain initiatory ritual and then keeping your dues paid up and attending enough meetings so that you can keep your name in the pot. That is exactly what membership in the church means to a lot of people these days. But when the word of God uses the word member, without a single exception, it always speaks of a member of the body. It uses the term in the sense of a direct functional relationship to the head. There is a great deal of difference between belonging to an organization and being a part of an organism. The church of God is the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, that is true; but we are members of a body, and the unity that we have is not a congregational unity at all in its final analysis. I am joined to you only because you are joined to Christ. There is not anything about you and there is not anything about me that has drawn us very close together. We are not so attractive that we must attract each other. But you are joined to Christ and I am joined to Christ, and the only way that I can be severed from you is to sever myself from Jesus. The body of Jesus Christ is not composed of congregations as such. The body of Christ is composed of individuals as such. We are not saved as congregations, and, thank Heaven, in view of some I have belonged to, we won't be damned as congregations either. We are saved as individuals, and if we are going to be damned we will be damned as individuals. Individuals compose the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the body of the son of God is composed of every individual upon the face of this earth who sustains a covenant relationship with Jesus Christ irrespective of all the various walls that have been erected by men in their failures and frailties in the past.

While we may talk about the Restoration Movement, it has been a

tragedy that many of us have confused the Restoration Movement with the Church of God. There was not always a Restoration Movement because one was not always needed, but there has always been a body of Christ. Jesus Christ has never been a shepherd without sheep; He has never been a head without a body; He has never been a king without a scepter. But some of those whom we recognize as martyrs and who died in the faith and were clothed with white robes would not even be called on to lead in prayer if they visited our congregations in these days. And I think it will be well for us to recapture the sense of the unity of the Spirit brought about by a conjunction with the Head whom we are to hold that we may grow up together in Him.

The new covenant that we shall talk about in the morning is a covenant that was brought about by virtue of the fact that it was engraved upon human hearts written by a finger of God — a covenantal community, a covenantal community which for years had no sacred writings of its own. It was 20 years before the first epistle was written. The message they heard from the beginning was to love one another (1 John 3:11). They needed no law, no statutes or commands for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. (Rom. 13:8). The epistles were not written to establish covenantal relationship. Let us first of all establish what it means to be in relationship or fellowship with God, and then let us be charitable and tolerant with each other as we grow up within that relationship. Thank you and God bless you.

KETCHERSIDE LECTURE IV

As I approach this last presentation, I want to express my very deep appreciation to all of you who, acting on the committee, extended the invitation and made it possible for me to be present with you and to share with you on this rather memorable occasion. I am not here this morning because of any scholastic attainment or because of any outstanding erudition. I think perhaps that you have, like the Lord, demonstrated that it is possible sometimes to choose the foolish thing; and I deeply appreciate in that respect you have patterned after Him, thus made it possible for me to be with you. As I leave this place, I leave with a deep feeling of gratitude in my heart that I have had the privilege of meeting you; for lo these many years there has been within my heart a hunger to know some of you better. I know that I have seen so frequently the names of Dr. DeGroot, Dr. Short. It seems almost astounding and amazing that I passed the home of Brother Short every time I took my children to school in University City; every time I went after them at Junior High School where his children attend as well; and yet I did not meet him until here in Tulsa. So if meetings like this do nothing else they make it possible for us to come to know informally in the Lord Jesus Christ those of whom we have heard so often.

I have been, as I have said before, in a rather enviable position. I am sure, that, as I listen to the discussions from both sides, I could learn from both and pray for both because I did not have to be thinking what I would say in replication to what had been offered. It is a very wonderful thing to be able to be on the inside and still to be on the outside, and, thus, to be able to evaluate and weigh what is said. First of all, of course, I must impress upon you that you are all my brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is in that sense that I have come. I like the fact that William Temple in making his address in one of the World Council meetings in the past pointed out that so long as we go with the expectation of teaching the others we shall never be able to accomplish unity. It is only when we go mutually to learn from each other that we shall bring about unity. So I am not here for the purpose of teaching you in spite of the fact that my part has been billed as a Bible lectureship. But I am here to learn from you, and I have learned

a great deal. I am very happy that there are those who, from time to time call in and remind the people generally that I do not represent them, because I want that clearly understood by everyone. I think that none of us in Christ Jesus can represent any other person in all this world. We meet here as free men in Christ and we should leave exactly the same way. I do not know of anyone else upon earth who could represent my views, because no one else holds them; and I would not attempt to represent the views of any others because I do not subscribe to all of them.

That same thing holds true even in our own intimate family relationships. Once in a while we will be going home from meeting and after Nell has been sitting in an adult class which I have been teaching, she will say, "Well, Daddy, I just don't agree with your exposition of that passage this morning. I think that there is some things you overlooked, and I just do not concur with it at all." Of course, I don't disfellowship her because she disagrees with my interpretation. I exercise all forbearance and kindliness toward her and say to myself, "That just demonstrates just how wrong a good woman can be." And we go on and live together. Not because we always agree, but because we love each other in spite of our disagreements. And I really have come to the conclusion that we are not actually divided over the things which have been credited with the division, I think that these things have been sore spots and they have been troublesome issues, but actually we only divide and separate when we cease to love. It is a lack of love that tears people apart. It is amazing how families can stay together through the years in spite of serious disagreements so long as they love each other. But the very moment they cease to love each other even tiny and insignificant things bring about division. And quite frequently, I think, we divide because that is the easiest way out of a disagreeable situation. But I am afraid that Christianity has never offered to the world, as a solution, the easy way. It is much easier, of course, to run away from home than it is sometimes to face up to the responsibilities at home. And it is sometimes easier for brethren to run off from each other than it is to face up to the problems as mature men and women. And the Apostle Paul, as I already have pointed out, said in I Cor. 3, that he addressed those that were divided in Corinth as "babes" and as "carnal" so that I conclude that our divisions are indications of the fact that there are still symtoms of carnality and immaturity among us. Otherwise, we would be able to solve our problems on a more mature level.

I like very much the authentic version by Hugh J. Schonfield. Now, I have had the privilege of corresponding with this Jewish brother. He is a converted Jew; reared, incidentally, in an orthodox family originally; and then, having moved to England he became converted to Jesus as the Messiah. I count him as one of the outstanding scholars of this day in Great Britain, and rank him along with some of the great scholars in Edinburgh and Glasgow, such as Dr. Barclay, of whom many of us, I am sure, have been reading in the past several years. Now, Hugh J. Schonfield is the only Jew who ever translated the New Testament in a form that was published, and many of you have been using, as I have been, his authentic version of the New Testament Scriptures. Now, I like this especially because Dr. Schonfield eliminates from his New Testament terms of ecclesiastical connotation, and seeks to recapture the idea of the spirit. I like, as much as I do his translation, the preface to it, and I have read it several times. In this preface he points out why the word church never appears in his authentic version. He also points out why the word baptize never occurs in it. The word "immerse" is used in Dr. Schonfield's translation every where the word "baptize" occurs in our English version. For instance, Dr. Schonfield, who incidentally is a member of

the church of England at this time, translates Acts 2:38 in this fashion: "Reform and be immersed, for the forgiveness of your sins in the name of Jesus Christ as Lord, and you shall receive the Holy Spirit as a gift." I like that. I like also his translation of Matt. 16:16, the words of our Lord, where He said: "Upon this rock, I will plant my community, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." I will plant my community. The "ecclesia of God" was a community of Saints; a community of the Holy Ones; and the word Saint had to do with separation. They were an ecclesia because they were called out. They were saints because they were separated from the world. We cannot be called out of the world without being called into someone or something. The writer of the Hebrew letter in chapter eight, distinguishing between the old covenant and the new, makes this quite clear. Here is the way he puts it, beginning with verse one: "Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in heaven; a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up, not by man but by the Lord. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices, hence, it is necessary for this priest, also, to have something to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary. For when Moses was about to erect a tent, he was instructed by God saying, 'See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain,. But as it is Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant He mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises." Of course, we have long since learned that the key word to the Hebrew letter is the word "better." Thirteen times this word occurs in the authorized version of the Hebrew letter, and thirteen times it impresses upon us the fact that the arrangement that God has made for us—the agreement into which He has entered with us—is a better agreement than any that has previously been made with mankind. And the thing that makes it better is that, in order to inaugurate this agreement, God himself, upon a vertical line bisected the horizontal line of man's existence; and, thus, Christianity is a historical religion and it is the only religion outside of Islam that is a historical religion. And even Islam today—the religion of the Mohammands—is not historical in the sense that Christianity is historical. Christianity is historical because Christianity is based upon the belief and the acceptance of a great historical fact. The love of God met mankind at the cross, and by faith man meets the love of God at the cross. Through an acceptance of the fact that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, Christianity takes its place among the religions of the world as being a religion based upon a great historical fact; a fact that is undeniable even by the atheist, who, though he may not accept the person of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, is yet forced every time he writes a letter to acknowledge the fact that the calendar was changed, and that time stood still, and then time resumed again; that something happened in the history of the world that makes this 1962. So Christianity is different from every other religion in the world. Other religions are based upon principles and precepts of philosophy that have been devised of men in their thinking; wise men, brilliant men, who have contributed much to the thought of the world, but the world never was and never could be saved by philosophy.

There is a constant difference, as the Apostle Paul writes to the church at Corinth, between the cross on the one hand, and the philosophy of men upon the other. May I suggest to you that there is a constant tendency upon the part of all of us to substitute the philosophies of men for the cross of Jesus Christ. There was that tendency in the primitive days of the

Church; there is that tendency among us who are moderns; there will even be the tendency to substitute the philosophies of men for the cross of Jesus. But when we do so, we allow the religion of Christ to become only one of the religions of the world instead of the hope of salvation brought down to mankind when God was in Christ.

The writer of the Hebrew letter goes on to say: "For if that first covenant had been faultless there would have been no occasion for a second; for he finds fault with them when he says, 'The days will come,' says the Lord, 'when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the House of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant and so I paid no heed to them,' says the Lord." May I suggest to you this morning, my brothers and sisters in the Lord, that, when people do not continue in His covenant, God Himself says, "I pay no heed to them." Our only hope of having God pay heed to us is to continue to pay heed to His covenant. It is upon that basis that God meets with us. "This is the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel after those days saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." I ask you this morning: Do you feel within yourself the fact that written upon your mind—your intellect—and written upon your heart—your affection—is the name of God and the covenant relationship which you sustain with Him? How ridiculous some of our historical conflicts have been over what name should be worn by a covenant people, when, in reality, the covenant people of God had no distinctive title given unto them. They were simply the "called out ones." Over the radio, through the newspapers, on the debating platforms, in forensic examination, through the years past there have been great discussions as to what name the church should wear. The church had no specific title given unto it. And when it begins to choose specific titles to distinguish, separate, and segregate itself from others, then it forfeits the greatest truth of all, the fact that the church does not need to be distinguished from anything else, because there is nothing else that is in its category. There is only one church. There never was but one. There never can be but one. The church is the called out. Man has no ability to call out anyone. Man has to be called out. Every man has to be called out. Whether it is one of those who live among the Aucas in Brizilian jungle, or the outstanding teacher in one of our great philosophical universities today;every man, if he is going to be a part of the covenantal relationship, has to be called out. And he has to be called out on the same terms and he has to be called into the same relationship. Since that is true it is ridiculous to talk about what name the church shall wear. From the standpoint of its possessions it is the church of God, the ecclesia of God. From the standpoint of its governmental disposition it is the kingdom of heaven. From the standpoint of its organism it is the body of Jesus Christ. It does not need to distinguish itself. We have fallen into grave time, those of us who began the great project to unite the Christians of all sects, for we have allowed ourselves to become a sect. And I should say this to you, that neither party in the present controversy that has been going on here in this very wonderful consultation, has restored the New Testament Church. There is some discussion among you as to whether you should even attempt to restore it or not; but I would like to say this: The last thing on this earth that most of the members among any of our groups in this day want to see, is the New Testament ecclesia in its purity of relationship to God. If you want to empty

your meeting houses and if you want to see your pews vacated more than they are now at your mid-week meetings, my suggestion is that you begin to try to recapture the real sense of the Christian relationship to God. You will find that there is a great deal more dross than there is gold making up our congregations at this present time. I challenge you to really mean what you say when you talk about recapturing the spirit of Christianity, the separated life, separated from the world, dedicated to God, in the world but not of the world, affect the world for good instead of being affected by the world of evil.

These are the problems that we face in this 20th century, and as we face up to these problems we are going to recognize the fact that many of those whom we may have looked upon as being crackpots, because they were willing to give their lives for a cause, may have come somewhat nearer to catching the real spirit of devotion and sacrifice than those of us who live in luxury. Col. John Glenn, a few days ago, forever destroyed the myth that this world is so great that we can be isolated from anyone who lives on it. There is only one world — we know that now — and that world can only be won for Christ by those who are consecrated and devoted to him. We must recapture the sense of community; not conformity, but community, and recognize that the recapture of that sense of community must be based upon Jesus and our relationship to Him and to God and our covenant with Him.

The trouble is, brethren, that today we are having to teach too many people to know the Lord. The outstanding thing about the covenantal relationship was this: "they shall not teach everyone his brother saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me from the least of them to the greatest." In the Old covenant you were born into it and circumcized the 8th day, and as you grew up you had to be taught to know the Lord and that you were in covenant relationship with Him. May I suggest to you that, in this modern world of compromise and "pussy-footing" and "wire-walking" and water-treading," we again have to teach adults who have been brought into the relationship of what we call the church. We have to re-teach them to know the Lord. This indicates that there is something wrong. We have not established this upon a covenantal basis at all; for upon the basis of the new covenant, those who have been brought into this relation will not have to be taught to know the Lord.

I do not want to become embroiled in nor do I want to become involved in the discussions that have been here held over church policy. But I do want to say in conjunction with the thing that I want to emphasize on the subject of the community of the saints, the covenantal community, that in Revelation, chapter 1, and in verse 5 and 6 we have this statement, "From Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and the ruler of the kings on earth, to Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." Now this was the message addressed by John the Revelator to the congregations in Asia Minor with which he had been associated during these last few years of his life. He had lived at Ephesus; came into constant conflict with Cerinthus and the Gnostic theories of his day; and saw the church dessimated and desecrated. It behooved this last survivor of the original envoys of the Son of God to present this message so that they could re-capture once more the sense of their own destiny. And we have lost this. We have built a church, and we have called it the church of Christ, but we have lost the sense of the priesthood that makes this possible. The fact is that under the old covenant there was a special priesthood which ministered in behalf of the congregation; but we have lost the idea that we are a kingdom, priests unto God, and that today all of us are ministers, and all of us are priests. There-

fore, each of us must have a sacrifice, and each of us must minister. We have forgotten the very essence of what Jesus Himself taught when He declared the reason for his mission to the earth. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give Himself a ransom for many." If we are going to recapture the essence of the purchase of the Son of God in coming to this world and reproduce in our lives His life, then we are going to have to come not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give if necessary our lives. This is the spirit that is engendered in the covenantal community. We are related to the great high priest as priests and it is the task of the priests to stand daily ministering. We need to recapture the sense of ministry to a stricken world. If everyone of us was doing what God expected of us to do in the world in which we live, and making the impact upon it that was made by early Christianity, we would not be so involved in our questions about who to organize and how to organize and when to organize. It must be remembered that we begin to talk about organization when some few begin to try to catch up all the rest and to band them together in a service which they would not otherwise perform. Many of our discussions these days grow out of the fact that we have lost our sense of real covenantal relationship with God. Instead of serving the Master we select someone to serve; and upon him we confer our responsibility for which someday we must give answer to the King.

We are blood brothers, not our blood, but his blood. We have been bought and purchased. We are part of a covenantal community. We are bound together by invisible ties and cords. We are not bound together by our mutual interpretation of doctrine. We are not bound together because we see everything alike. We are not bound together because we interpret everything in the same fashion. We are bound together by our response to the good news. We are bound together because we recognize Him as the Messiah, the Son of God, and as Lord. I should like to say this, with reference to the original covenantal community: The proper response to the good news concerning the Sonship of Jesus is faith based upon a belief of credible testimony; but the proper response to Lordship is to acknowledge one's belief of testimony by faith. One acknowledes the Lordship of another over his life by what he does. Jesus knew that. He said, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I tell you?" It is not enough in this world that we look upon Jesus as the Savior, we must coronate Him over our individual lives as Lord; and to do that we must do something. It is not enough just to be believers in Christ. We must be doers in Christ. For that reason God proposed, as Alexander Campbell long ago pointed out, that there was one fact that man must believe in order to come into the relationship, and there was one act that man must do in order to demonstrate that Christ exercised Lordship over his life. When the covenantal community started it began with a proclamation of glad tidings. At the conclusion of that proclamation the speaker said, filled as he was with the Holy Spirit: "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that this same Jesus whom you have crucified hath God raised up, and hath made Him both Lord and Christ." It is not strange therefore, that before Jesus left this earth, He said to his envoys whom He set out to an alien world, "Go into all the world, and proclaim the glad tidings to all creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned." Why did He link these two? He linked them because there must be a two-fold recognition. The response to the proclamation concerning his Messiahship and His Sonship is faith. "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God,

and that believing you might have life through His name." But there was His Lordship, and one demonstrates his acceptance of Lordship by his obedience. The master-servant relationship is not merely intellectual testimony or assent; the master-servant relationship expresses itself in what we do. So at the very threshold of the community of the saints He demanded, first of all, acceptance of the fact that He was the Son of God and then He demanded subservience upon the part of those who accepted Him.

We have been made a kingdom, priests of God, and we demonstrate our acceptance of His Lordship by what we do. So by faith and by baptism the covenantal community was created among the family of men. It exists today as He existed then to fulfill the word of God. The covenantal community is the body through which Jesus Christ affects the divine purpose among men today. When that body is torn by schism and ripped by division, then it negates the work of God and refuses to answer His prayer. "Neither pray I for these the envoys alone, but for all them which shall believe on me through their testimony; that they may all be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they all may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou has sent me." The world will be won for Christ when all who believe are one in Christ! How shall that be brought about? Consultations like these contribute to it, for they hold open the door for discussion in a spirit of love. But we must approach them, not as men who have made a success in building up our parties, but as men who are mutual failures in keeping the peace. If, before we come, we kneel and pour out our hearts to God; if the hot tears stain our checks; and if the anguish sobs burst up from down inside where the covenant is inscribed upon our hearts, then such consultation will be beneficial if we come, realizing, as we leave the room of prayer and assemble in such gatherings such as this to further discuss, that you are not separated from me but that we are separated from each other; then good will result. It is as we draw close to Him that we draw close together. Then, perhaps, we can recapture once more the spirit of the covenantal community which will embody for men in this day the hope of their salvation in the world to come. God be with you. God bless you. "God lift up His countenance upon you, make His face to shine upon you, and God give you peace."

## CAN WE HAVE ONE BROTHERHOOD?

**by**

**James B. Carr**

We had better. In view of what is taking place in and out of the ecumenical movement, this is no longer an academic issue but a practical question: De we have anything to say to anyone about Christian unity? With the mergers that have already occurred and the one proposed it is obvious that the whole Christian community is interested and concerned.

Several consultations have been held exploring the possibilities of internal unity among our Christian Churches. These have proceeded upon the assumption that we do have something to say about unity (though we are not agreed as to what it is).

We must make our message to others apply within the brotherhood itself (and at local levels) if we do not want to become a laughing stock for all. If our message on unity will not work within the brotherhood it will have no appeal to those outside.

And we had better work at this task with haste and urgency. Time is running out on our witness. I have no doubt that the principle of unity which has been our heritage will ultimately obtain. But it may outgrow our brotherhood and achieve unity on a larger scale while we are splintering.

Perhaps the most serious effort at internal unity before the current series of consultations was that of the Commission on Restudy of the Disciples of Christ. This commission reported to the International Convention in 1946, 1947, 1948. The report stated what were the dominant issues and the points of agreement and disagreement at that time. There have been few changes since that time. The same issues are debated with a new vocabulary and with more intensity today.

This commission report requested the brotherhood to continue discussion and explorations of these issues through the various agencies and media available. Outside of the mere publishing of their report this aspect of their suggestion was never carried out. It should be done yet.

In order to stimulate thought and fruitful discussion of this important issue, I would like to challenge both the cooperatives and the independents with regard to their disagreements. (Much could be said about the variation and disagreements within each of these groups, also. This must be recognized and many of the same principles apply. But the real threat to Schism comes from this broad distinction between cooperatives and independents).

I. Are we a denomination or a movement?

The Restudy report stated that it is agreed that we were a movement to begin with rather than a denomination, and that our historic position has been to avoid denominational status. To do otherwise would be to abandon our attempt to realize unsectarian Christianity.

The difference of opinion today seems to be between the concept of an undenominational brotherhood (or church) and a brotherhood that accepts denominational status while trying to surmount denominationalism itself.

To all outside the brotherhood (Christian and non-Christian alike) we are just another denomination. Nothing we think, do, or say will change that image for them. This is a fact to be reckoned with.

Another fact to be noted is that we have all the external forms, structure, organization, etc., of a denomination; in fact we have more than most—two national conventions, weekly periodicals, many missionary agencies, etc.

We are now confronted with a new possibility: what is the purpose, and what will be the result of the commission on Restructure of the brotherhood? Some questions have already arisen which cannot be thrust aside lightly if we hope to have one brotherhood: Will local autonomy be structured out of existence? If so, how can it legally be accomplished? Does this mean another attempt at a delegate convention? If so, on what basis can it be guaranteed to work when two preceding attempts failed?

If restructure has as its purpose defining our status denominationally so as to achieve ground in mergers with denominations, the commission may as well face the fact that our churches will not abandon the undenominational concept. We will carry a witness to Christian unity on an undenominational basis into any proposal for merger in which we may be engaged. The main portion of our brotherhood is already united in this matter and the few leaders who are ready to discard this point of view in order to bring about a quick union with the United Church of Christ may find too few who will follow their leadership when the issue is finally drawn.

If, on the other hand,, the purpose of restructure is to exclude the so-called independents, it will prove impossible to accomplish. For the same machinery that will work to exclude one group may be used ultimately on those who devise it. Such a purpose only leads to schism and this is the very problem we are trying to solve in the brotherhood and in the total Christian community.

I suggest to cooperatives and independents alike that we stop arguing over whether we are a denomination or a movement. The argument is bound to end in a draw (and the fastest draw wins). Instead, let us use the point at which we all agree as a means of witnessing to those outside. We agree that undenominational Christianity is preferable to divided Christendom. In conversations with them, locally or ecumenically, we can give a united voice in deploring denominationalism. If we ever lose this concept we have no witness to the rest of the Christian world and no reason for existence as a brotherhood.

II. What is the nature of structure in relation to unity?

Polity is not described, prescribed, or proscribed in the New Testament. All existing forms can quote proof texts. As a matter of New Testament study it can be shown that congregational autonomy has less Scriptural support than any other form.

Everyone agrees that something needs to be done to offset the weaknesses of local autonomy: isolationism, internal dissention, splintering, doctrinal decisions by majority vote, etc.

The only purpose and value in any structure is function. The trend today is toward functional organization. At the local level such organization makes for unity in evangelizing, educating and serving the needs of the immediate constituency. To do the same on a world wide scale requires some form of cooperation between congregations — some agency of cooperation, some form of organizational structure.

Even if it were possible for a single congregation to recruit, train and send out one hundred living link missionaries without help from other congregations, it should not ignore the unity of witness to be made by coordinating its effort with those of other congregations. Some kind of organization above the local level is therefore expedient. The problem is what kind and how to initiate it. Certainly such an agency should be accountable to the total body of Christian Churches. It should represent all fairly and not merely a segment.

The Restudy Commission report (1946) correctly stated that the leaders of the North American Convention deplored the necessity of starting another assembly, and that this dissatisfaction was a clear call to provide a convention which would unite our people rather than divide them.

It is a fact that none of our existing agencies (cooperative or independent) claim to have any control or authority over local congregations. Some individuals of each persuasion may so act but they are out of harmony with the stated purposes and policies of the agency represented. All such agencies exercise advisory leadership only.

To the cooperatives I say: purge out those individuals who tend to be dictatorial and thus stimulate adverse reactions.

To the independents I say: be careful lest your agencies incur the same weaknesses you have criticized in others.

To both I say: let us openly and honestly seek a type of structure which will meet the total needs of our brotherhood and not just those of one segment. The International Convention was intended to do this. It might have at one time. It has not done so yet. The North American was not intended to do anything other than protest the weaknesses of the International and to supplement its influence. It has not proved to be a unifying force either.

Perhaps the World Convention can become the unifying fellowship. Or perhaps all our present conventions need to be scrapped and a new type arise which will do the following:

(1) Provide for warm spiritual fellowship which includes all peoples among us regardless of differences, however serious the differences may seem to us.

(2) Provide for recognition of the status and validity of all brotherhood work, especially that which is not now recognized by the International Convention. This does not mean that the Convention should control such work only that it receive reports from any direct support mission as well as from the currently reporting agencies. Colleges and seminaries not in the Board of Higher Education should also be recognized. Historically, we have pursued three different philosophies of ministerial education. The institutions of each of these have a right to be heard in any convention which is meeting the needs of all our people.

(3) Provide inspirational preaching and leave out promotional emphasis. There are better media for promotion than the convention platform. Some of our best ministers never get to preach at our conventions simply because the program does not provide enough room for preaching.

(4) Provide for our relationship to other religious bodies, through participation in the World Council of Churches, the National Council. The charges of liberalism and of communism levelled at these organizations is without foundation in fact and should be ignored. Contrary to the opinion of many independents it does not condone denominationalism to recognize the fact that they exist. We can have a visible, tangible witness to them through such agencies rather than by isolation. However inadequate such attempts at unity have been, we cannot ignore them. Lesser goals may serve the ultimate objective.

I call on the cooperatives who share these views to be careful lest we surrender basic convictions of undenominational Christianity while cooperating with denominations.

I call on the independents to withhold condemnation until there is something definite and concrete to criticize. Then do so in frank and friendly spirit. Such criticisms will gain more of a hearing within the interchurch framework than apart from it. Isolationism is a worse evil than any it attempts to cure since it is visible separation or division from the largest body of professed followers of Jesus Christ. Interchurch cooperation is at least a visible evidence of the desire for unity.

III. What about open membership?

Few, if any of our churches would admit unbaptized persons to membership. Some define baptism by the dictionary rather than by the New Testament. Few, if any, would practice anything other than immersion.

It is hard to estimate exactly the percentage of churches which actually admit unimmersed transferees. Probably not more than ten to fifteen percent of our congregations are involved. And most of the members of these congregations are immersed. The total number of unimmersed persons on our roll books would probably be less than one percent of the total membership of the brotherhood. (Any local church probably has a larger percentage of members whom the Lord will not recognize).

No doubt open membership has been used as a whipping boy for other issues to which it is not necessarily related. Too much attention has been paid to it by its opponents and too little by its proponents.

It is a fact that open membership has caused division in most of the congregations where it was introduced. It is, whether we are ready to admit it or not, the biggest threat to schism within our brotherhood. It is not unitive but divisive at ecumenical levels, since we are not the only immesionist group involved, and since it is unlikely that the others (more numerous than we) will compromise the Biblical definition for the dictionary!

Therefore, open membership really serves no purpose. Its fruit is now and always has been division rather than unity. However, I doubt if those who advocate and practice open membership are in any frame of mind to dis-

continue the procedure at this time. So I propose a temporary measure for living with the problem until it can be solved.

To those churches and ministers now practicing open membership, I suggest that they make it clear to every unimmersed person received, that since they allow unimmersed persons to be members on the basis of local autonomy, such membership is in the local congregation only. It cannot be considered membership in the brotherhood. They should be further instructed that if they should desire to transfer to another Christian church, it might be required of them to be immersed before being received. This is the only way such ministers and congregations can play fair with sister congregations. It is the only way to respect the local autonomy of those who do not practice open membership.

To those ministers and churches who do not practice open membership, I suggest that we neither secede from the brotherhood because of less than one percent who are unimmersed, nor attempt to excommunicate those who do practice open membership. Either secession or excommunication (real or implied) inevitably leads to schism, the very problem we are trying to solve.

IV. The Nature of the Unity We seek among Ourselves.

"In faith, unity; in opinions, liberty" is still valid. But when we come to define areas of essential faith (essential to unity and salvation) and differentiate it from non-essential opinion, we immediately embark on controversy.

The Restudy report (1946) stated that there were two tendencies in the matter of faith which cause tension: (1) the abandonment on the part of some, of the theological implications of the simple confession of Christ as Lord, making His Lordship that of a moral and spiritual leader of mankind, casting doubt upon His true divine nature. (2) the making of a particular interpretation of the doctrine of Christ an essential basis for fellowship, thus creedalizing the confession.

Does essential faith include theology? Must we require a confessor to interpret his faith in a way that satisfies our understanding? Can the Lordship and Saviorhood of Jesus stand as a sufficient creedal test? It must because it did in the New Testament. Here, if we are ever to achieve unity on any level, we must accede to Biblical authority.

To be a brotherhood with a united witness we will have to arrive at a minimum basis of uniformity with allowance for wide variations of understanding, interpretation, application, opinion.

Historically, we have found such a core of uniformity in the New Testament practice with regard to three things: (1) the confession of faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior; (2) immersion of penitent believers into Christ and into His Body, the Church; (3) the unity of Christian fellowship expressed in the weekly observance of the memorial to Christ's Death.

The current trend, both in and outside of the ecumenical movement, is toward the Biblical belief and practice. If we want to believe and practice what will be believed and practiced when the body of Christ is reunited, these three things should be the starting place. If we can reach a practical agreement in this minimum core it will do more than reunite our brotherhood; it will demonstrate the practicality of our historic witness to unity.

If this is to be our unity of faith, then we must allow just as sincerely for wide variations of opinion. We have some forty thousand members of Christian Churches who practice footwashing as an ordinance of the church. In some places our ministers wear the clerical garb (I do not recall a single text which treats of the minister's wearing apparel). Some of

our congregations have a holiness tinge to their worship and witness. We have all varieties of opinion with regard to eschatology. We have already mentioned at least three different philosophies of higher Christian education which found expression in our colleges and seminaries for ministerial training. There are variations of opinion with regard to ministerial and missionary recruitment and support. And we could keep adding to this list of differences among us.

We do not need to divide over such differences. We may keep our own cherished opinions and allow others to do the same. In areas with sufficient population to warrant we should encourage more than a single congregation, deliberately planning that each shall meet different needs, tastes and opinions. Such congregations can and should coexist peacefully and make a united witness to the non-Christian community.

This is not the final word on internal unity, nor is it intended to be an ultimatum or warning. It is intended merely to be a springboard for progress in thought. There are other issues to be treated than the few selected here. Some believe that our differences with regard to the nature of Biblical authority is more basic than anything else. Others believe that we will have to rethink our worship practices and the theology of worship before we can resolve our disunity. Much more needs to be thought and said than this one paper could cover.

I believe that Christian unity will come. I am sure that the Holy Spirit will have to implement it. No human leader, not even a modern Alexander Campbell, can have all the wisdom in himself, or the confidence of the dissenting parties, to effect the reconciliation needed. But we must not sell Providence short. Let's give the Holy Spirit an opportunity. Let's do something, try something to unite our brotherhood. If we do not, we may wake up some day to find that the Body of Christ has united without us who have preached too long a unity we have not dared to practice among ourselves.

## THE BASIS ISSUES, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

**by Woodrow Phillips**

(Prepared for the Invitational Consultation on Internal Unity at Blackwell Lake, Oklahoma, October 1962. To be repeated at the public Consultation in Tulsa, Oklahoma in March 1962 with a critique to follow.)

It is not with fear of being misunderstood that I approach this subject, but, rather, with a knowledge of the very real possibility of failing to be representative of the majority of thinking within the sorely divided ranks of the Restoration Movement in our day. I do not expect to begin to exhaust the possibilities of the subject, but, rather, to attempt to clarify some of the statements of issues that are basic to representative segments of our brotherhood.

Behind the definite cleavage that exists among us there must be some basic issues, or else the external evidence of separation would not be patently evidenced in almost every community where our church witness exists. Apparently some still employ the childish method of wishful thinking, attempting to say, "It is a publishing house battle, and I will not be involved," or, "It is over agencies, and I am neither for nor against them."

Underlying all the rather bitter accusations and often biased propaganda in periodicals and booklets remains the divergence of attitudes toward (1) what we are as a brotherhood, (2) local assemblies, (3) individual Christians, and (4) the procedure which we follow to make this witness felt in our world. This discussion is an attempt to say that if it were not for some rather sharp differentiation in theology, ecclesiology, higher criticism and resulting methodology in applying these varying views to the church of our

day, we would not be divided. Neither would we be cognizant of the need of recognizing basic issues which do separate us.

I must presuppose that the basic issue in regard to all our problems in unity is our attitude toward the Bible as the revelation of God to man. Since it is from the Scriptures that we build all our theological frameworks and Christian ideological theories, here is the real center of our differences. If we could adopt a uniform attitude toward the Bible, particularly toward the New Testament record, we might not produce uniformity of interpretation and certainly not of practice (if interpretation varied) but we would regain the touchstone that formulated the restoration ideal in the beginning. We would then be able to charitably recognize our differences as of minor importance in relationship to the unity of mind toward God that His revelation in the living Word offered to man.

Liberalism and conservatism cannot and will not walk the same road because they represent two totally divergent views of the Bible. To the conservative, the Bible remains an authoritative Book speaking to him as the very voice of God, and supremely to be revered in all things upon which it speaks concerning the Christian religion. To the liberal, The Bible may be a revelation of God (or it may be something far less than that), but it is part of a progressive revelation that present existential theology can relegate to inferiority when compared with the divine-human encounter of "neo-orthodox" crisis experience. Here is the crux of the matter—the basic issue. The Bible speaks on creation, revelation, incarnation, miracle, atonement salvation, resurrection, eschatological hope—a thousand myriad other subjects that in some way relate themselves to God's dealing with his creation of man. But what is our attitude toward this message? If we can achieve unity in this sphere of intellectual inquiry, we can produce unity in its practical applications to ecumenical witness. If we fail here, we must forever abandon hope of eventual internal unity within our own ranks. We shall then have to seek to offer our Christian testimony in separated, if not warring, camps—to the joy of all who desire to see the church's thrust blunted by its own family struggles over definitions of theology and polity.

I cannot envision complete unity in interpretation of the Scriptures. There is too great a variation in educational attainments, and emotional and cultural environments on both racial and national levels. However, I can see (and sincerely hope for), a recognition of brotherhood without uniform interpretation if we can revere the New Testament Scriptures as the authoritative Word of God. Let me attempt to state this principle more clearly. I can with complete candor disagree with another individual upon his practice of the Christian religion, yet still regard him as a brother (though defective from my point of view in his development, as he also must surely view me), if we both agree upon the authoritative position of the Scriptures in spite of our individual interpretations of them. With this unanimity as a foundation, we might come to a closer uniformity of practice, or we might agree to differ in our methods. But we would be honoring the same Christ revealed to us through the same Living Word.

Of course, sectarian prejudice would not allow this broad an approach to some persons who have determined that it is their interpretation rather than the Scriptures which are authoritative. However, this is not a deviation from the restoration beginnings, for the earliest accusation against Thomas Campbell was latitudinarianism. It is not the divergence of our practice that has divided us, but, rather, our failure to maintain the same attitudes toward the Word.

Liberalism is said by some to be a dead issue. But that statement is made by the forces of liberalism, not by

those millions of Christians who still believe in an authoritative Bible.

The mass of Christendom is forging closer together in our age than it has since the time of the first seven ecumenical councils. This is not so much due to fear of communist aggression or sociological advance as some suggest, but from a wider dissemination of the Bible and a more advanced study of its contents. Christians of major religious groups do not feel far apart. They have learned through war and mission witness how close they really are to each other.

Recognition of this unity in the realm of faith certainly is a major attainment of our century after 400 years of Protestant fragmentation without valid reason for such division. The attempt to frame this growing unity of faith into a ecumenical world church would certainly be welcomed by all if it were not that many of the positions of leadership in this action are held by avowed liberals who seem to care little for the teachings of the Scriptures or their authoritative place in church life. The conservatives cannot by the widest elasticity of conscience participate in councils or legislative actions that ignore the basic issue of Biblical authority.

The question we must ask and answer is: "What is the Bible to us and to our churches?" When we have done this, we have faced openly and honestly the basic issue that lies between various segments of our church life. This gives us no room for evasion of the responsibility for unity which rests upon us. Instead, it gives a central criterion of truth from which to rebuild our shattered armies that envisioned God's people as one a few short years ago. We might ask, "Was our dream of unity too big? too impractical? too theoretical?" I don't think that it was. But as we drifted slowly but steadily from the sure mooring of Biblical authority, we fragmented into three large segments of brotherhood life with splinter groups appearing within each of these larger divisions.

Having offered a brief survey of what I conceive to be our basic issue, I would attempt to offer some attention to the basic issues, past, present and future. It is with deliberate attempt that I have reduced these to three, one for each of the time sequences already mentioned. These large statements will open our thinking to their intimate ramifications in present church structure.

### Past Issues

### THE PRINCIPLE OF DIVINE SILENCE

It was here that our Restoration forefathers had the first real disruption of unity within their ranks. This manifested itself in the missionary question, the music question, and as a secondary issue in all agency life. The Lunnenberg letters with their inferences toward open membership, and Mr. Pinkerton's avowal of his desire for such practice, were not basic issues at the time of their first discussion.

This principle was quite clearly stated in Thomas Campbell's "Declaration and Address" when he suggested that we respect the divine silence equally with the divine pronouncement. However, he apparently did not forsee the immediate difficulties into which such a position would lead him. If the silence were equal to the Word, then the Bible must be made to speak on all matters pertinent to the Christian religion and its practice, whether or not it actually did do so. This developed the first real textual monstrosities for use as theories of interpretation that our people had produced. Some of these still encourage sectarian views within our ranks. Exegetes must work overtime to substantiate positions already taken. This principle of divine silence brought about the eventual break with the anti-instrumental brethren, the break being consummated in the 1906 census through the petition of David Lipscombe of the **Gospel Advocate.**

While this has not been a source of major disturbance within the Dis-

ciples' wing of our movement, it has, nevertheless, produced its certain heritage of splinter groups even among us. To the anti-instrumentalists the application of the principle of divine silence is a never ending question. It must be faced over church buildings, colleges, benevolent institutions —all attempts at agency life either within the local congregation or in cooperation with other congregations. With the first appearance of the American Christian Missionary Society, the Creeths, and after a very short period, many others began to use this same principle as a valid argument to show why the society should not exist. The practicability of such an instrument was not particularly attacked, but, rather, its right to exist at all, since it was not mentioned in the Scriptures. Here was the past issue at its vehement height. "If the Bible does not tell us how to organize, operate, and finance such an agency," they reasoned, "then it must not exist."

Divine silence then directed its fire against the musical instrument after its introduction at Midway, Kentucky in 1859 by Mr. Pinkerton. Unfortunately since Mr. Pinkerton was an extreme liberal and an advocate of open membership, this has been sufficient evidence, until this present hour, to cause the anti-instrumental faction to label the Disciples' wing liberal without any examination of beliefs of individuals deemed necessary.

The Disciples of Christ (a name used to denote the separation of the anti-instrumentalists listed as Churches of Christ) never did interpret Thomas Campbell's principle of divine silence as he gave it or as the southern brethren used it. They did not recognize the "Declaration and Address" as anything more than a religious Magna Carta upon which reunion of divided Christendom might be built. It was not authoritative, but rather a blueprint for action that must be implemented by common sense, and above all else, the authority of Scripture. It was to the New Testament that the Campbell's made their final appeal, and it was here that the Disciples of Christ determined to wage their battle against sectarianism of any form. This naturally led to a view of the divine silence vastly different from that of the Churches of Christ. The Disciples determined that anything could be written into the divine silence that did not violate a stated precept of Scripture. Under this interpretation they continued to give a successful witness for unity until a new wave of liberalism beginning about the turn of the century caused a further drift away from Biblical authority.

This liberal group seems to me to have deliberately invaded the realm of divine silence, not with the sectarian interpretations that attempt to make the Bible speak on subjects where it does not, nor to write in that which does not violate Scripture, but, rather, to write in what they please. Since they believe the Scriptures are not to be the final appeal for both our faith and practice this is a natural development. At this juncture the past issues began to merge into the present. It took 56 years for the Churches of Christ to withdraw from the brotherhood to form their distinct segment of church life upon the restoration tradition, but as surely as they insisted that the divine silence could not be invaded, that break must come. How long it will take the liberal elements in the Disciples of Christ to force the Christian church into another definite break because of their determination to write into the silence with the authority of Scripture remains to be seen. Apparently such an historic occurance will come, and when it does, the second break will be as definite as the first. We must not think, however, that this cleavage seeps down to the local church level immediately. A whole new generation of ministry must be raised up, educated in this line of thinking, before the break is that apparent.

The past issue did divide us. There are some indications that a healing process is in the making as Churches

of Christ see they do not function well without some writing into the divine silence and congregational co-operation in benevolence, education, and propoganda are clear signs among them pointing in this direction. Such moves are resisted by some of their splinter groups but the main stream of their church life does not feel far removed from the conservative Christian churches. It is to be hoped that the Spirit of God working through His Word will re-weld the broken unity among these people.

## II
## The Present Issue

### THE PLACE OF AGENCY LIFE IN CHURCE POLITY

Since the Disciples, whether conservative or liberal, did not feel that writing into the divine silence was violation of Scriptural authority, agency life flourished among them.

Colleges, missionary organizations, benevolent institutions, ministerial placement offices at state level, division of churches into districts for efficiency of labor, and many other facets of brotherhood life of non biblical origin did not disturb our basic tenent of "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak," although it did lead to the practical abandonment of the shibboleth "Where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." We continued to use the slogan, but interpreted it to mean that in the silence we have no authoritative voice. Each man, each church, must speak for itself.

It is my belief that we would have continued to walk together in harmony under this program even when we totally disagreed with the practice of some particular agency. We would have felt that such an agency would die of its own mismanagement or faulty practice through lack of brotherhood endorsement through giving. Many agencies did die precisely through that rather nebulous, but effective, instrumentality.

As agency life multiplied, some began to fear lest the continual birth of new structures pleading for the support of the brethren would curtail our overall outreach, and that multiplied organizations would destroy economic efficiency. This was perhaps a valid assumption.

Into all this activity also came what is now called the "Independent Missions Movement." It roused no stir of protest or any resentment because all recognized the right of a church or churches to commission anyone to do their work whom they might choose.

It was not until the agencies began to display the first faint indications that they would interfere in local church autonomy that internal protest against these agencies began.

Many feared the proposal for a united agency for they saw here, in embryo form, the encroachment on local polity. Although this fear was genuine and was often voiced back and forth in our papers, and although protest meetings were held against such a merger, it began to be clearly seen that the underlying issue was liberalism in leadership. This the conservatives were afraid of. The presence of liberalism in agency leadership was not denied by some, but was decried as mistrust and libel by others. However, the liberal element continued to attempt to hold sway in the proposed merger. The entire machinery for the formation of a united agency was in motion before the 1919 International Convention in Cincinnati. This convention formally consummated the union that produced the United Christian Missionary Society and its later affiliated agencies, all under the general direction of the International Convention.

The question was raised as to whether a reporting convention had the authority for such an action, but that was really a side issue, even if a valid one, for the deed was done, and now the brotherhood must learn to live with its own creation.

It is still my opinion, although I personally am much opposed to centralized agency life as a means for

most effective mission, that our churches would not be as close to an actual split as they are, (if it is not already a fact as Dr. DeGroot suggests in his book, Church of Christ Number Two), if the new agency had not resisted attempts at direction from its constitutency, and had not so freely represented itself as able to speak with some degree of authority in denominational and ecumenical gatherings as the voice of the Disciples.

It was not the creation of an agency or agencies that produced the present issue, but it was those agencies' place in the polity of the church now.

In fact, it is self-evident that the conservative churches are creating and have created many agencies of their own. These vary greatly in structual form, but they are not dissimilar to the agencies of the Disciples prior to the amalgamation of 1919. The Christian Missionary Fellowship is the closest to the United Christian Missionary Society in structure, but many others perform for the churches the varying activities which we conceive as being best, or most effecient-ly operated, outside of the local congregation. These are, in keeping with our shared view of the divine silence, extra-biblical, but are not anti-biblical or in violation of the Bible's authority.

We do look at these agencies with degrees of concern as to the faithfulness of their leadership or as to their efficiency in operation, but we do not challenge their right to exist.

To attempt to state then that the present issue is agency life in reference to whether it is scriptual or anti-scriptual is to beg the real issue.

With the conservatives' own agencies (large or small, individual family or corporate existence), the question is, "What do you as an agency attempt to say on the polity of the church?"

Any such organization, no matter how valid its labor, would be repudiated if we felt that it was interpretating for the brotherhood as a whole our witness to the religious groups around us or representing us with authoritative voice in councils.

This the conservatives are convinced is exactly what the unified agencies reporting to the International Convention are doing, propose to do in even greater measure, and have done in the past even when the voice of the convention majority demanded that they cease and desist.

Also, part of this present issue of agency life in relationship to polity is the liberal action within this portion of Disciples' witness in violation of the teaching of the Scriptures upon salvation, without even any attempt being made to say we believe this is what the Scriptures teach. In other words, the question of open membership is not propounded to the conservatives as the liberal Disciples' interpretation of Scriptual teaching, but rather as their right as individual congregations to legislate whether the Scriptures have spoken or whether they have not. This is the overall basic issue making its appearance in the realm of present polity.

The determinative action of the Board of Governors of the United Christian Missionary Society, following the introduction of the Medbury resolution by the late Mr. Long at the 1925 Oklahoma City Interational Convention, (which resolution asked for the immediate removal of all who advocated or practiced open membership from the United Christian Missionary Societies employment), and the thwarting of the obvious intent of that resolution by the board's interpretation, was to many conservatives the death-knell of their attempts at even half-hearted cooperation in brotherhood-wide agency life.

When it was seen that the agency could determine polity, the issue was clearly drawn for many. As we have already said of the past issue of divine silence, it took a new generation of ministry to make the break as nearly evident as it is right now. I am not

certain we can even find a road back, but I believe it is worth the attempt. Unity in Christ is the acme of Christian witness, and we cannot afford to let our own personalities or opinions cause us to forgo honest and penetrating discussion of these issues that divide us.

As the Disciples' agency life began to enter into comity agreements, foster open membership in several foreign fields, and encourage participation on a denominational level with the emerging interdenominational church councils, the conservatives slowly withdrew in dismay at this turn of events. Their withdrawal was not over agency life, but over the agencies' continual intrusion into church polity.

Their own creation of agencies proves this point and we now need to face the issue that presently divides us. Does the agency (any agency) have the right to act for the church in an authoritative manner, or does the individual congregation have the right to withhold its endorsement and withdraw its support of the brotherhood agencies and still continue in the fellowship of the faith?

If we could resolve this question to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, we could reunite our forces, even if that unity were in some degree a determination of continued difference in approach to our mission thrust.

As long as liberal leadership in agency life continues to ignore the first view of divine silence of the Disciples we will not have unity among us. When we write in where the Scriptures have already spoken, we divide our Restoration Movement, and this reverts to the underlying issue of our divergence attitudes toward Biblical authority.

### III
### The Future Issue

CHURCH STRUCTURE IN RELATION TO ECUMENICAL WITNESS.

This issue is already upon us and will continue with us until we have a definitive break between the conservatives and the liberal-dominated agencies. It will continue to be a very live issue for both groups even if such a division occurs, although the International Convention and its affiliates are already attempting at least some answer to this problem.

Perhaps some explanation is necessary. Denominational advocates in the Restoration Movement cannot conceive of any means of offering witness toward an ecumenical church without a complete restructure of the brotherhood. Conservatives feel this very restructure, now at least proposed and in embryo stage, defeats the witness we desire to offer.

To present an ecumenical witness was the very strength of the Campbellian portion of the restoration. To form a new party was the antithesis of their dreams. That they did form a new party indicates some failure of their aspirations. But do we have the same problems paramount before us today that they faced? I think at least some of these have been ameliorated.

We do have a world ready for Christian unity. Even those who have not yielded their allegience to our Christ often remark that it is our division that keeps them from such a confession.

Sectarian creedalism is on the way out of our theology, while a Biblical creedalism is on the upswing. Liberalism is facing the empty pantry of its sociological vision of the last century. Two world wars in our enlightened West have driven us closer to God, authoritative biblicism, and unity than we have been since the Scholastic authoritative interpretation of truth produced one church in the Middle Ages. We are now in somewhat the flux apparent in the Post Nicean Counciliar period when men wanted to get together without giving up distinctive beliefs and practices, but were possessed with a willingness to examine once again their views to see if they were truly champions of orthodoxy.

It seems to me liberalism has nothing to offer this age except union on a sub-biblical level. This will prove to be insufficient. Then is it necessary for our churches to have a denominational status to be represented or to influence this great return to unity that may prove to be the real revival of our age? I at least would challenge you to think seriously before you answer with a positive affirmative.

Perhaps this is too polemic for our discussion but at least some exploration of possibilities must be made before we can think of restructure as anything more than a vested-interest agency hold upon our entire church life.

Even if restructure is necessary for such an ecumenical witness, have we actually explored the biblical structure of the church, or has our polity been a conglomerate of republican democracy? Is it more the product of the culture of our beginnings than the authoritative design of Scripture? Here are the questions, but how do we determine the answers? The future holds that explanation, for we are still on the threshhold of the tomorrows of the church.

I think some of the writings of K. S. Latourette on the church of tomorrow, and the prophetic statements of Roland Allen need more exploration before we structure ourselves outside the pale of an authoritative New Testament.

If the structure of Romanism has proved inadequate for the faith of Protestants, will our following in the same direction do any better for the generations that lie ahead? I think not.

Yet, we will restructure, either from denominational preference or from writing into the divine silence so as not to violate our authoritative Bible, or from a new biblical interpretation not colored by the red-hot forges of republicanism born in the American and the French Revolutions. Never forget that the writings of Locke and Cambell, together with the Bible, were the tools most of our pioneer Restoration preachers carried in their saddle bags. Perhaps it would have been better if the Bible alone had been allowed to give us structure in the beginning.

I believe that we have an ecumenical witness to offer. I believe we need to consider seriously our structure in relationship to that witness. But before God, I appeal to you, my Christian brethren, to settle our basic issue first.

What is our view of the authoritative Word of God, the Living Word, the Bible, particularly the New Testament which claims within itself to be binding upon us today?

If we cannot defeat a liberalism that negates Scriptural authority we can never have unity, for one issue will rise upon another to divide us.

Give us an authoritative Bible—and we will produce unity even in our individualist practices, for we must acknowledge a man to be a brother who claims the same Christ that we do and states his method of allegience to His Lord to be from the Word of God. This unity in the realm of faith is an immediate possibility. The later unity of polity and practice will then produce itself.

I am not sure but that the divine silence is a deliberate act of God to allow the church to fit every culture, every race, and every age.

I know the unchanging tenets of Christian faith includes an omnipotent God deliberately inserting Himself into history in the incarnate Christ who died for my sins. To Him I owe my entire allegiance. Herein is the basis of my faith. I know of this message through the Bible: preached, believed, obeyed and taught until I mature into a full-grown Christian capable of telling others the enactment of redemptive love, that in Him they will see their Saviour. Our immediate brotherhood of faith, produced through the Living Word, is the unity we all seek.

May we with real respect for each other's opinions see the basic issue of authority as the source of our division, and, knowing it's issues both past, present, and future, may we resolve to crown Christ Jesus King of kings and Lord of lords. Under His authority may we attain unto "the unity of the faith."

## "REACTION TO PHILLIPS' 'BASIC ISSUES' "

### Dr. Donald F. West:

I think friends, that it is very apparent that we are involved actually in a very informal process in this consultation. I think it is fair to say, and this is, I think, something that no one needs to be criticized for, that I in reacting to Woodrow's message, must admit that I have heard this message twice, once last October and once tonight. I have also had the privilege of reading this in a very scattered way only within the last twenty-four hours because Woodrow thought that I had a copy of his manuscript and I did not. And I have seen the outline which is in your hands just about as long as you have. Now, having said this, I want to go further and say that I would like, as one person here, to react to what Woodrow has said, in the interest of having an authentic conversation about some of our troubles and about some of our possibilities in the realm of unity.

Now I have the courage to attempt this reaction tonight chiefly because, by means of getting together on three brief occasions, I have come to have a very high regard for Professor Phillips. I think he entertains a similar view of me. We are engaged in this exchange as Christian brothers. I think we deplore very sincerely the mess we are in as a people, and I think we share also some hope that we may fraternize more effectively, assist each other more than we have in the past, if haply we may have a more effective and more winsome witness for our historic position as a people. Now I don't agree that Woodrow is the conservative here and that I am the liberal. I reject those terms almost categorically for the reason that they fit us as individuals very loosely and irresponsibly, for we do not even know what a liberal or a conservative is at this point. The whole American people is once again engaged in a quest for meaning in terms of these very inaccurate and very emotional labels, and I deplore the fact that we are now inserting into our thinking secular terms which I think are of very dubious value. Now I think, in a sentence which was not in his manuscript, Woodrow said that in some ways he was a liberal, is that correct Woodrow? I am very conservative in some ways as I am sure many of you people are. I am even orthodox in some ways! But I am unashamedly liberal in some of my views. Now you can't pin those labels on me at all except as you admit that it is possible for me, as it is for you, at certain points of belief and conviction and loyalty, to be either one or the other. I would think that it would be much better if we would take terms which are spiritual and, let us say, historically Christian, and Biblical, and therefore I question the whole business of being so emotional about whether a person is a liberal or a conservative. Now I think Woodrow expected me to say this, and I say it with kindliness and courtesy and not a little humor, because it is kind of a bad joke, really, that we are taking these very inaccurate and very unfair, and I would say, very unedifying terms so seriously. I think one thing we had better do in these consultations is to get out of this unprofitable habit of using inacurrate terms. They are dated, and I believe at times they may be defeating, as we prosecute our purpose here in these meetings. Now let me, within this ridiculously short time that both of us have to tackle these extremely important issues, indicate in a few references to the text of this very helpful message some points of solid agreement, some points of honest criticism and some expressions of hope of on my own

part for getting out of the difficulties in which we have languished for so long.

I really question the continued citing of the principle of silence among us. I think perhaps this is where I will have to be a real liberal. I rejoice in the fact that I received a scientific education in certain departments of knowledge, including the Bible, and if ever we were unscientific and wholly indefensible, it is when we, as a people, began to talk about the principle of silence. Now we have had a very interesting time with this method of interpreting the Bible, but I suggest that in many ways it is utterly absurd, and I see no reason why we should be pursuing this method when it is not helping us. Now I am sincerely puzzled tonight by the use of this term except as it describes an experience in our history, for at one point, I think perhaps from the human standpoint, Professor Phillips has talked about the "shibboleth of silence" and then at the end he raises the question that perhaps God's silence was a method by which he was dealing with us, to judge us, or to provoke us, or whatever. I am confused and I suggest that in future meetings of this consultation, that we take another look at this, and I am sure that Professor Phillips would eagerly pursue this with us in order that we not be vexed or frustrated by reiterating this, I think, quite dubious contribution to Biblical understanding. Now I say this with entire respect for the motive of Thomas Campbell, but I think we just have to face our history and realize that perhaps we were not very well led at this point, and that we may be forgiven if we should express a judgment which has within it, quite a bit of wisdom, and this wisdom has certainly been won out of intense suffering and I would just say, some very, very unhappy history.

Now may I also express the opinion that the issue on the matter of agency is not a present issue but a passing issue. And I would take this view for the reason that Woodrow has admitted that agencies or organizations are now being used by all of the segments of our so-called brotherhoods. I remember the aphorism of Woodrow Wilson who said, "No cause, however holy, can hope to exist without some organization." Now friends, this is not a matter of prejudice, or a matter of sentiment, this is a matter of intelligence. This is a matter of common sense. At length we have to face reality on this. If a community of people want to get a job done, they have to take some steps to do it, and this may involve a modicum of organization. Now according to our beliefs as a people, all of this is in the realm of relativity or of the expedient or methodology or instrumentality or whatever. I should think that God would want us to be responsible in prosecuting His purpose. I think this is an issue on which we actually have faced reality and we have more unanimity than I have realized, and I have learned a very great deal from these consultations about how much organization and how many agencies our so-called non-cooperative or independent brethren have. They need them, just as we need them in the totality of our brotherhood experience.

I would also join with Woodrow in feeling the importance of the issue of structuring or restructuring our so-called brotherhood. We have displayed this quite a long time. We as a people, have resembled a kind of a jellyfish, at the point resisting any normative or any practical structuring of our life. We are a crazy-quilt of efforts to get ourselves along the way to some responsible churchmanship and I welcome the advent of some common sense. Now I think that we have been helped very greatly by having the issue of the corporate expression of our brotherhood's life, visavis the ecumenical experience, in this paper. I don't think of anything more important than what we have been offered than the pointing up of this issue. We are literally sweating blood as a brotherhood now, in order to face this need. This is a need! This is not a game. This is not a debate. This is an organic proposition. We cannot

exist, let alone express ourselves, let alone witness, as a Christian body without some structure. Now I think it is fair to say, and I think Woodrow will permit me to say this, from within the experience that I possess along with Dr. Owen and Dr. Dickson and others here, in respect to the search for a responsible meth od of representing the life of our brotherhood in ecumenical relations. I feel a little bit silly commenting on this in the presence of persons like Dr. Bader and Dr. Owen, who are immersed in this. I belong to this picture in certain realms but not as integrally or as intimately as they. This is not a football to be kicked around. This is a very urgent and practical matter, and we had better succeed or our existence or our witness will not only be irrelevant, we may turn out to be a kind of an ecclesiastic nuisance because we don't know our own minds, or because we can't responsibly organize ourselves. Now I think that there is a real danger involved in this very pointed and almost compulsive, shall we say, accusing of liberals as being a kind of a gang of scoundrels, who years ago got into the leadership of the United Society and perhaps other agencies, and who have tried to conspire all this time to run the show or to keep these agencies within just a little coterie of leadership. I don't accept this. Our International Conventions all through the years have represented a wide spectrum of leaders as well as the rank and file of our people.

I deplore the use of the term "fundamentalist" among us, as Woodrow has heard me say before, and I have said this respectfully, but I would use this term right now in saying that we have had among us, representatives of the widest spectrum of theological viewpoint and I believe that representatives of this kind of spectrum have been and are now, involved in the processes of ecumenical representation and of the study of our brotherhood structure and relationships. I think that it is unfortunate that the councils of churches, such as the National Council of Churches, or the World Council of Churches, are demeaned as if they are dominated by a bunch of liberals. This just isn't so. This doesn't correspond to the facts. If you have paid any attention to the experience of the World Council of Churches in its recent meeting you will have noted that there is a fantastic gamut of theological viewpoint represented in that Council. This is one of the miracles of the modern ecumenical movement that such a desperate, such a variegated company of Christians could have so much unity and so much of the joy of apprehending the promises of God in this ecumenical experience. Did you notice, friends, that not only were the Russian Orthodox accepted into the World Council fellowship in New Delhi, but the Pentecostals. I suggest that we pay attention to that fact. A hundred years from now the church historians may say that this was as significant a fact about the New Delhi Assembly, as the admis sion of the Russian Orthodox. Now the discussion of liberal or conservative in reference to such a matter such as this, is almost superficial, for the glory of the ecumenical movement is in its being ecumenical, and many of the leaders, many of the titular leaders, many of the professional leaders of the ecumenical movement, are quite orthodox. Again, others of you could testify to this. I think of Dr. Bader's competence to discuss this. My gracious, we are vexed time and time again by the fact that we have in the ecumenical group some real "stick-in-the-muds." We have some **very** orthodox brethren. They won't budge, and to say that there is a flouting, or an ignoring, or impugning of Biblical authority within the ranks of the ecumenical movement, is to say something that is quite without foundation, and this is a real understatement. I suggest friends that if we are going to say such serious things about this, shall we say, ignoring of or the lack of respect for Biblical authority, that we had better spend some

more time in talking about Biblical authority. There are many churchmen, many theologians who would classify themselves as being liberal, who have a profound doctrine of Biblical authority. Who is to say that so-and-so does not believe in the Bible? Now there is something anachronistic about my being perhaps superficially libeled as a liberal, when I think about what I know and what I believe about the authority of the Bible. Now let me say something by way of solid testimany and solid fellowship. I think that if there was any point of belief on which Woodrow Phillips and I have the greatest mutuality, it would be on our solid conviction of the authority of the Bible. Now this is when I take some hope. I think when we explore each other's minds and each other's faith in this consultation, we are going to be pursuaded that we are not divided here but that we are united here, and the fact that we may come to the discussion of the authority of the Bible from somewhat different avenues, is to discover that there is more than one way of approaching this question and there is more than one way of profoundly holding for this truth. I take hope from this, friends. I don't think we are as lost at this point as we think we are. I think it is a matter of defining our terms and also it is a matter of not debating or accusing. It's a matter of taking each other into our heart of hearts and testifying. I glory in the ecumenicity and the catholicity of this meeting tonight when we can have the type of Bible lectures that we have had, which is ever so edifying and it may be so partly for the reason that there may be a somewhat different approach offered and in the variety there is new insight, and there is the claiming of old truth that we have always believed.

Now, may I just quickly conclude by suggesting that our real issues, and I am sure Woodrow would agree with me, for he has said so in the words of his manuscript, the real issues are division or unity. Which one do we want? Not which one is possible, but which one do we want? I think, friends, as I have suggested at other times in this consultation, that there have been times when we did not want unity, when we resisted, when we resisted God's efforts to even thrust it upon us. This is in the realm of sin and one day, again, we shall have to answer for this. I have already suggested that the real issue, again, is the attitude that we have toward the Bible, as Woodrow has pointed out so clearly. And I would certainly agree that liberalism, whatever that means, in leadership is a very terrible issue among us, almost an obsessive issue among us, and I think an issue that is in the realm of mental health and spiritual health, as much as in the realm of ecclesiastic discussion. I think we need to offer treatments to each other to get over a sickness that we have because we fear each other, we distrust each other, and we have hurt each other. My friends, before we have resolved this issue, we have to bind up some wounds, and we have to permit a healing process to obtain. Now what are we doing about that? Have we come together in this meeting to hurt each other more, or have we come to institute, if possible, a process of healing? We have the discussion of the necessity of organization and then we have this tired, old, unprofitable issue of open membership. I don't say this to demean the importance of this issue because it is all too important. We have used this as a club with which to beat each other. May the Lord forgive us for permitting this issue to linger in our midst for literally generations and we seem to be no closer to resolving it, to transcending it, to by-passing it, than we were forty years ago. I look at you, who are supposed to be the leaders of our people, and I look at myself, and I have to say, "Has there been so great a failure among any people, than the failure that we have experienced to extirpate an unprofitable issue?" Now I like to think that we are smart enough as a people to once and for all skewer this issue and

throw it out of our midst. I submit we must do something about this to liquidate, as a nuisance issue, and I am sure that Woodrow would join with me in expressing this hope. The fact that it has to come in, is a very sad symptom of our predicament. Now, friends, I am an optimist at this point. I think that when we have looked at this issue honestly and intelligently, and have recognized to a certain extent it's a dated issue, that we can cope with it and we can dispose of it, and I trust that before the ministry of those sitting in this company has finished, that we shall be able to say, "At last, we got beyond the issue of open membership." Now I hope that you will forgive me for perhaps bringing to this as much emotion as you have noticed that I have offered, but Woodrow is a man of passionate conviction, and he has been ever so generous and so fair in saying just what he believes, as he does all the while, and he has invited this response, I salute him as a Christian brother and believe that if we will have such an irenic spirit and claim each other in Christian brotherhood, that we shall settle some of these questions that have been be-deviling us for ever so long.

## STEPS TOWARD DEPTH AND RECONCILIATION IN UNDERSTANDING AND FELLOWSHIP

### George Earle Owen

Permit me a few preliminary remarks before presenting a series of questions as a cooperative process of understanding and evaluating both the Cooperative and Independent position. There are various ways and levels of carrying on a Consultation or encounter. First of all by **debate and argument**—the meeting providing a platform for arguing the case or cause. This can be helpful for sharpening and clarifying issues, but, it does not create the climate in which unity or merger can take place. We seldom influence those whom we antagonize. Debate is carried on with the idea of categorically establishing one's premises or claims and repudiating the opponent's premises and claims. Debate has its value and place, to ventilate difference and verify premises, but it is not conducive to healing wounds and mending fences. Debate assumes a battle ground and forensic attitudes. It endeavors to transcend the tendency to think with our hopes and fears and appeal to the mind, logic, and reason.

Of a different nature and level are **study papers and presentations,** generally the area where scholars meet to evaluate philosophical ideas, theological concepts, basic assumptions, or to look at some of the sociological and or psychological factors that shape one's thinking and feeling. Here are presented historical papers to get a perspective on the origins of beliefs, traditions, and practices. This kind of encounter is done best by a task force of scholars and students. This kind of encounter is needed, and is always valuable. Critical pruning ofter eventuates from this.

On not quite such a scholarly scale are **presentations for discussion** — generally with provocative questions to be discussed in smaller groups. These discussions are primarily conversations directed toward understanding one another. While something of the other methods of looking for the truth have entered in by and large, the Consultation on Internal Unity and Division has been in the spirit and methods of presentations and conversations. At this point there is a need for more provocative questions to be used in the smaller study groups. Provocative questions are valuable in challenging worn cliches, isms, and dogmatic attitudes and ideas, and to get at the deeper issues. Perhaps we have not always asked the right questions.

On another level and in a little different spirit is the **testimony** and confession encounter. This implies humility, trust and integrity. We cannot un-bare our souls and minds in the presence of people who would abuse

and use us, whom we dare not trust. One object it is hoped, of this consultation is a real desire for fellowship, friendship, and discipleship (all learners). This approach is both preceeded and followed by contrition and penitance. It grows out of mutual concern. At its highest level it is **worship and prayer.** We kneel in prayer and rise in chastened fellowship. Fortunately provision has been made in these encounters for some of this, but not enough.

Perhaps my contribution can best be made by some suggested questions. These questions are loaded and impertinent by some standards, by other standards they are pertinent and needed. It is not anticipated that we can find the answers to even the main questions, but is not this the road over which we must travel if we expect to arrive at the same goal? The questions have a wide range, from the Bible to the practical administration of the Church's mission. They represent the bias of the one propounding them. Those of you who know me know that the last thing in the world I am is an unbiased person. I trust that I am an unprejudiced person, in the best sense of the term, and reflect the spirit of the French deist, Voltaire, "I do not agree with a word that you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

The intent of these consultations was not to provide a platform for the radical few but a forum for the exploration of a common grounds. Preliminary to a fruitful encounter is the exploration of a number of unanswered questions. It is hoped these questions will elicit more, possibly more pertinent and profound questions.

## QUESTIONS

### I BIBLE

1. What is the difference, or is there any, between the Bible and the Word of God? Did the Word become flesh or did it become paper and ink?

2. Is the Bible an "open Book" to be read by anyone and interpreted as he understands it? Or are there bona fide interpreters? If so, on what basis?

3. What is meant by saying the Bible is infalliable? Literalism? Inerrancy? All passages equally authoritative? Does rejecting this idea mean one does not accept the authority of the Bible? Which text is infallible? English or Greek? Which English text or which Greek text?

4. What is the distinction between **Kerygma** and **Didache?** (See Second Consultation on Internal Unity pp. 11 15) Between Christianity and the gospel?

5. What is the role of Biblical theology in Cooperative-Independent discussion? And do we mean biblical theology in a narrow legalistic style or the grand style?

6. Is the authority of the Bible found in its form or substance? In the event of Jesus Christ or in the verbal statements about the event? Is it primarily (1) a collection of authoritative statements, or (2) the record of God's self-revelation? Is it propositional truth or existential truth?

7. Are "words" or persons the locus of revelation? What is the difference between (1) discovery (2) inspiration (3) revelation?

8. Is it possible to come to the Bible with a completely open mind? Is it possible for any age to apprehend God's Word without seeing it within the cultural framework of which the age is a part?

9. In what ways or areas is the Bible authoritative?

10. What place do conscience and training have in understanding and accepting the Bible?

### II CHURCH

1. Which came first, the New Testament or the Church? Did the New Testament produce the Church or did the Church produce the New Testament? Can we accept as infallible the canon selected by the ancient catholic church? What does this say for Restorationism?

2. Was there one "type" of New Testament Church, or were there many, (Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus)? If only one type, what elements identify this?

3. To what extent is the Church (1) one and divided (2) local and ecumenical (3) given and achieved?

4. Is congregational polity the only valid polity for a Christian Church? If so, why?

5. Can one absolutize the principle of local autonomy? Is there not a contradiction in giving agency representation official responsibilities without official authority?

6. Does every one who belongs to church belong to Christ? Does every one who belongs to Christ belong to the Church? What church?

7. Do you agree with L.N.D. Wells: "There is no Christian local church. If it is Christian it isn't local; if it is local it isn't Christian"?

8. What kind of joint programs (programs in which more than one church engage) are compatible with the concept of local church autonomy?

What is meant by local church autonomy and what are its implications?

## III RESTORATIONISM

1. Is the purpose of "Restorationism" to restore the New Testament Christianity, or the New Testament Church? Is church identical with church polity?

2. Should restoration deal primarily with function or structure?

3. Is the New Testament a static book by which without change the Body of Christ should govern itself? If change is admissible, on what basis?

4. Is it true that, "Restorationism" has united none, but divided many? (Statement made in a study document at 1960 World Convention Study Conference at Edinburgh on "The Nature of The Unity We Seek.")

5. How and to what extent are the findings of the Campbells valid today? What other insights since then have been discovered as equally valid? How much of their finding is determined by the Lockean psychology, sociology and metaphysics of their age?

6. What is the basis for saying the Disciples of Christ are a movement and not a denomination?

7. What needs restoration—pattern? structure? ordinances? fellowship? spirit? organization?

## IV HOLY SPIRIT

1. Does the Holy Spirit still guide the Church? If so, in what way?

2. Does the Holy Spirit operate with its chosen few, the certain charismatic leaders? Or can the Holy Spirit also operate through (1) congregations, (2) organizations and agencies, (3) conventions and assemblies? If so who determines when it is operating and when the person is self deceived in thinking it is operating?

3. Must the interpretation of the Bible by the testing of the Spirit always be a private matter, or can it take place in the redeemed Christian community?

4. How is the authority and guidance of the Holy Spirit mediated?

5. Does the Holy Spirit prefer "amateurs" or "professionals"?

## V CHRISTIAN UNITY

1. Should the unity we seek make union necessary or unnecessary?

2. Is Christian unity a means or an end?

3. Is Christian unity based on belief, (what we can **say together**) or cooperation, (what we can **do together**) or both?

4. Can Christians talk meaningfully about Christian unity without including conversations about forms of Christian union?

5. Is the Disciple plea for Christian unity still relevant? If so what is this plea?

6. How can we best express the **given unity** of the Church?

7. Do the United Churches overseas have anything to say or contribute to our quest for Christian unity?

## VI CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

1. Did Jesus have anything to say about membership in the Church, or was he talking about discipleship? What is the relation between the two?

2. What are the only conditions of membership in the Body of Christ? Are people not Christians when they fail to meet those conditions? Are they the same for a local congregation?

3. Are the steps of membership in the Body of Christ also the conditions of salvation?

4. What do you understand is meant by (1) closed membership? (2) open menbership? (3) ecumenical membership? (4) inclusive membership?

5. Which is primary, one's local membership in the congregation or his ecumenical membership in the Body of Christ? Can the two be separated?

6. Should open membership be made a test of fellowship? On what grounds?

## VII FREEDOM

1. Is one free to believe what he wishes? Is a congregation free to practice what it wishes?

2. Are there limits to local autonomy? If so, what?

3. Are congregations free to (1) organize as they wish, (2) give as they wish (3) ordain as they wish?

4. Is there any freedom from or without responsibility? if not, what constitutes this responsibility?

5. Is the sovereignty and freedom of God best protected by (1) individuals totally unrestricted by organizations, or (2) the voluntary disciplines of associational connections?

6. To what extent, or in what areas, are Christians free?

7. May God operate through state and national agencies and boards only if congregations permit him to?

8. How free can individuals and churches remain if they face responsibility, issues, and problems beyond their control?

9. Do you agree that the democratic process is the best way to preserve freedom and act responsibly?

## VIII COOPERATION AND INDEPENDENCY

1. Is cooperation commended and commanded by the Bible? If so, cite instances.

2. Can responsible and effective missionary work be carried on without cooperation?

3. Can one be neutral in regard to the cooperative work of the brotherhood?

4. Can Independents claim the privileges of cooperation without the attendant responsibilities?

5. Can or should cooperation or non-cooperation be made tests of fellowship? In the church transfer of membership? In agency membership?

6. At what points can and should Independents cooperate?

7. Does, or should cooperation with (1) other communions (2) the National Council of Churches (3) World Council of Churches impair cooperation between Cooperatives and Independents?

8. Is, or should, the administration of the missionary dollar be a basis of cooperation or non-cooperation?

9. What are the basic (1) weakness (2) strength of cooperative work?

10. To what extent have Independents already become cooperative? How united are Independents? In what ways?

11. Can responsible cooperation be carried out apart from the employment of democratic principles and procedures?

12. To what extent is responsible cooperation by individuals and groups a mark of maturity?

13. Which is the more important (1)

the minimization of organization and delegated responsibility or (2) the organization and authorization of effective agencies to carry out the mission of the Church.

14. Are not autonomy and cooperation mutually contradictory relations? Does not the world mission of the Church compromise the local autonomy of the congregation?

15. What are the basic assumptions (1) cooperation (2) independency?

16. What rights, if any, do Independents have to enter with intent to take over churches established by Cooperatives? What rights do Cooperatives have to recover Cooperative churches taken over by Independents?

17. Are local congregations the "happy hunting grounds" of self-appointed groups?

18. Who represents whom among the Independents? How can any Independent by the nature of his claim represent another?

19. What is, or what should be, the role of (1) the Historical Society in the Cooperative-Independent encounter? (2) the Commission on Cooperative Policy and Practice of the International Convention? (3) the Council on Christian Unity?

20. How complete is the Independent-Cooperative cleavage in Brotherhood life?

21. How will, or how should the Commission on Restructure affect the Independents?

22. What are the basic, seemingly irresolvable, difference between Independents and Cooperatives?

23. How much contrition and penitence is there over this division? How much should there be?

24. How do separate and autonomous congregations finally form a brotherhood?

## IX CONVENTIONS

1. Is there a justification for two Conventions or assemblies? If so, what is it? Are these conventions inclusive? If not, why not?

2. Do not two large assemblies or conventions create the image of division, and further division?

3. What are the values and validity of reporting to the International Convention? Is the opportunity for review, advise, reporting on financial auditing justified?

4. What are the criteria by which (1) ministers (2) churches should be listed in the Year Book? What is the purpose of the Year Book?

5. To what extent is, or should the International Convention be (1) inspirational fellowship (2) an expression of brotherhood unity (3) a business and reporting Convention (4) the locus for the world outreach of the church (5) a medium for expressing the sentiments of its constituency (6) a representative assembly?

6. What is, or should be the involve ment of the World Convention in the Cooperative and Independent encounter? What will be the purpose of a World Convention if and when the churches overseas go into United Churches?

7. Would it not be possible for the two Conventions to celebrate the Lord's Supper together? What would be gained if they did? What misunderstanding might be created?

Inability and unwillingness to deal helpfully and hopefully, realistically and charitably, with questions that involve basic differences raise the question of the fruitfulness and desirability of continuing these consultations. The purpose of these questions is to explore differences not to put another on trial. It is recognized that we are in a dynamic and transitional period in our Brotherhood life. A Commission has been set up by the International Convention, the Comission on Cooperative Policy and Practice, to study rather carefully and responsibly the nature of the Inde-

pendent movement and the nature of the Cooperative brotherhood, the causes of separatism and what ever rapprochement can be established. In addition to this the Commission on Brotherhood Restructure is going much deeper than questions of restructure. It is actually analyzing the process of Restructure that has been and is going on in the Brotherhood life to ascertain its direction and basic assumptions. First and primary questions have to do with function rather than structure so we are entering a period of asking ourselves a number of searching questions. It is in this context that it seemed desirable to look at some of the major questions that a number of thoughtful people are asking.

May I indicate further directions and depth for any kind of serious consultation. In all of this we must move from pat answers to fundamental questions: from closed minds and cliques to open minds and fellowships; from a study of structures to a discussion of functions; from intransigent exclusiveness to a more charitable inclusiveness; from a feeling of unconditional surrender to a position of mutual fellowship; from personal attacks to more personal contacts; from false and pretentious defenses to declarations and demonstrations of love and fellowship; from dogmatic rigidity to amicable reconciliation; from scoring debating points to searching for points of agreement; from intellectual statements to spiritual perceptions; from contrivances for unity to a contrition for disunity; from sectarian pride to ecumenical humility; from conversations to confessions; from witness to worship; from the picking-out-of-context approach to the finding-in-context approach; from stereotypes of disagreements to prototypes of agreements; from destructive criticism to instructive and constructive criticism; from the point of view, "we don't need you," to the Christian unity point of view, "we need each other"; from discussion and dialogue to the discovery of each other in mutual friendship.

At the foot of the Cross we are all sinners; at the foot of the Cross we stand under the judgment and love of our Lord. At the foot of the cross we should be able to move from controversy to invocation. At the foot of the cross we can form a real circle of love and fellowship of reconciliation. There is a risk in praying together. If we were all to bow in prayer, literally get down on our knees and stay there long enough, there is no question but that we would find the deeper unity we seek and need.

## A REVIEW OF THE PAPERS OF GEORGE EARLE OWEN

### Delivered During The Second Consultation on Internal Unity

by

ROBERT OLDHAM FIFE

### INTRODUCTION

It would seem most appropriate that one commence a critique of another person's thinking by first expressing appreciation for the contribution which that thought has made to his own. My study of Dr. Owen's presentations of last year has made this common courtesy a just obligation. I feel deeply indebted to him for many of his insights, and for the thinking which they have stimulated.

In his papers Dr. Owen touches upon issues and problems which are of great moment to us as a people. It is true that many of these issues are not new, but the persistent manner in which they have commanded the attention of succeeding generations makes it evident that we must yet be disciples—learners—who humbly and earnestly seek the truth as it is found in the will of God.

The present critique is offered in this spirit. Its purpose is to point out and further discuss our major agreements and differences as Dr. Owen has presented them. Our hope is that through such a dialectic our mutual understanding of truth may be enhanced, and our unity preserved.

My own personal motivation arises from twin loves: the love of the Brotherhood, and the love of the truth. I firmly believe these two to be intertwined inextricably. There can be no brotherhood apart from truth, and there can be no embodiment of truth save in brotherhood.

The structure of a critique may follow the original order of presentation somewhat in the form of a running commentary, or it may seek to draw together related insights whereever thy may appear, and treat them synthetically. Each of these approaches has value and limitations; but in hope that the major problems confronting us may be seen more clearly, I have selected the latter method.

The papers of Dr. Owen are ambitious in scope. They reveal much study, research, and considerable breadth of interest. Forthright and suggestive, they well merit further consideration and exploration.

The paper entitled, "The Reason and Position of the United Christian Missionary Society," is largely a pragmatic examination of the nature and purpose of the United Society. In this work he compares the principles of "cooperation" and independency," traces the historical development of the Society, and explains certain of its policies with reference to our movement and to the cause of world evangelism.

The other paper entitled, "Unity and Diversity Among Cooperatives," is more theoretical, and therefore, in my judgment, more fundamental. The principles set forth in this treatment are basic and comprehensive, including for the most part the viewpoints expressed in the other. For this reason I believe the latter paper becomes the better medium whereby the issues may be examined. I would of course expect that anyone reading this paper would avail himself of the opportunity to read those of Dr. Owen, for it is on them this discussion is based.

One final word remains to be said by way of introduction. I do not come to this task as an opponent debating, but as a brother discussing. While others may so consider me, I do not wish to be a partisan. I am committed to the concept of fellowship which involves self-giving wherever that offering of life will be received. While human terms may legitimately describe our preferences or opinions, I reject all such as definitive of fellowship in Christ. Others of different persuasion would obviously approach this task in a different fashion, but I here express my own position in order to provide a perspective in which my own observations may be placed.

I only hope the cause of truth and brotherhood will be advanced through this critique.

For the sake of this discussion I have classified Dr. Owen's numerous insights under three general heads: Order, Authority, and Personality. These shall be considered in the above sequence.

## ORDER

It is not unexpected that the problem of Christian Order should occupy a major portion of our attention. As the "Extension of the Incarnation" the Church has been confronted by the real problem of incarnating the one Christ in disjointed bodies. Since Christ is not divided, it is obvious his true body cannot be divided. The question therefore becomes, "What is that true body? How can it be known or recognized?"

At this point it is significant to note Dr. Owen's conviction "the New Testament does not give us a foreordained or immutable structure of the church for all ages." (1) He furthermore accepts as proven the thesis of Dr. A. T. DeGroot, "That the principle of restoring a fixed pattern of a primitive Christian Church is divisive and not unitive." (2)

But does this mean there is no **order** or form which characterized the universal Church of the apostolic age? Did the universal Christ fail to find universal embodiment in one visible

(See p. 127 for footnotes.)

Church? Did the universal Gospel not find universal exhibition?

It is said, "The task of the church today is not to restore a pattern or structure of the New Testament church but to rediscover its spirit and mission." (3) This statement may possibly be called forth by our own loss of vision, in which we have often seemed to believe that the restoration of the New Testament pattern, or order, was an end in itself. Structure has often been accorded preeminence over faith and life. Obviously we have not restored the Church if we have but duplicated a body. This is not a church, but a corpse.

(p. 127 and also footnotes (4)-(30)

Yet I fail to see how the "spirit and mission" of the Church can be separated from its order. To be effective in the world "spirit" must find an embodiment suited to its nature and mission. At the same time, restoring to the Church its original order is futile unless that order becomes the means through which the Holy Spirit is embodied, and His mission fulfilled.

Our alternative is not therefore to seek for the Church either an original order, or an original spirit and mission. Rather, it is both spirit, mission and order which must be our concern.

My understanding of the idea of restoration may be stated in the following manner.

First, Christ did create His Church, constituting it a body suited to the indwelling of His Spirit, and to the fulfilment of His ministry. This is given.

Second, that original creation is reflected in the New Testament. It is therein seen to be essentially everywhere the same, but circumstantially everywhere diverse. There was unity in the **esse,** diversity in the **bene esse** of the apostolic Church.

Third, Since Jesus Christ is the same, His mission the same, and since humanity is the same, were we to grant to the Holy Spirit free movement in our day He would incarnate himself in a body essentially like unto that which was his original creation.

Fourth, That the conscious effort of the Church to reform itself according to that original creation of the Spirit is to enhance his redemptive power in the modern day. Far from being divisive, I am convinced that such continued reformation—or restoration —is unitive.

What is that fundamental order? I think it is implicit in Dr. Owen's definition of the Christian Church as "a fellowship of those who follow Christ"—a fellowship which "is held together by the spirit of Christ and love." 4 Now I would not read into this definition any content not intended by the author, but it does seem to me his definition has significant implications for this question.

The Church is a fellowship. Fellowship is rooted in something common —in this case the Person of Christ. Thus the Good Confession becomes a mark of that order. Fellowship is exhibited and sustained in the act of corporate worship. Hence, the worshiping congregation is a mark of that order. Fellowship is the Koinonia —the offering of life. Hence, the extension of that fellowship to the world through the Gospel, and the creation and renewal of that fellowship through the sacraments are marks of that order.

I much appreciate the phrase, **"those** who follow Christ." (5) This is reminiscent of Thomas Campbell's definition in which the Church consists of "all those who profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him . . . " In this there is recognition of the fact that Christian fellowship is necessarily and essentially **personal** — not political. This has very significant implications for the problem of unity which presently confronts us.

There is also in this phrase a recognition that fellowship can exist among

those who are yet learning — who "**follow** Christ" (6)—who confess that they yet know only "in part." All too often we think we have "arrived," and we are all too prone to limit fellowship to the few of us who (we think) "have arrived."

But ours is a fellowship of **faith**, and we are all to be learners after Christ. Therefore, we ought not to limit fellowship to those few who happen to be in our own level of understanding. Discipleship surely involves what might be called "the fellowship of growth." A Biblical example of this concept is to be found in the case of Aquila and Priscilla, who neither cast Apollos out, nor left him in ignorance, but who gave themselves to him in truth and love with the result that the unity of the Church was enriched.

A third facet of this insight is found in the term "follow **Christ**." Only that which relates to Jesus ought to be definitive of the Church. It is all too easy to follow other shepherds or develop partial loyalties, or to set our own conditions under which we consent to walk with another who also seeks to "follow Christ."

A fourth aspect of this definition is that which speaks of the Church as "held together by the spirit of Christ and of love." Fellowship which is grounded in faith, expressed in order, is confirmed and perfected in love.

In the light of this definition of the Church as "a fellowship of those who follow Christ," may I ask, what is the significance of our preoccupation with the terms "independent" and "cooperative," and with the parties these terms represent? Do our definitions of these terms relate to Christ? It is obvious they do not. (8)

Now if these names be simply expressive of opinions or preferences, and be not allowed to hinder our unity in Christ, they may be legitimate. But when we allow these or any other such terms to become definitive of fellowship, whereby some who seek to "follow Christ" are excluded, we contribute to schism. Having commenced on such high ground, and with such clear vision, are we as a people doomed to repeat the tragedy so often enacted in the Church, in which the divine and universal is abandoned for the human and sectarian?

Yet it is in this very frame of reference that many on both sides speak of the impossibility of "neutrality." Dr. Owen says, "One of the basic assumptions of cooperatives is that no one can be neutral, and one of the false assumptions of at least some independents is that one can be neutral . . . Neutrality is impossible for one who has convictions." (9)

Let us then speak of convictions. Do we really believe that Christ determines His fellowship with men on the basis of what we call "independency" or "cooperation?"

Kant's dictum, "To know is to judge," is quoted as indicating the necessity of choosing either "independency" or "cooperation." But what if one's knowledge of Christ and His Church leads one to judge that the proposed alternatives are not the real issue? It is said one can be neutral "only if one is completely ignorant, has no loyalties, no love, no purpose, no intentions." (10) This may indeed be the heart of our difficulty, for the measure of our knowledge, and the object of our love, loyalty, purpose and intention are here decisive.

I am personally quite willing to take my stand, to make my commitment. Nor would I be on "two sides of a question." I would only ask that the right question be submitted. I do not believe that the question, "Are you independent or cooperative?" (in the sense in which we use the terms) is in the same category with the inquiry, "What think ye of Christ, whose Son is He?"

Our problem is far deeper than the question of "independency" or "cooperation." It involves the very foun-

dations of our faith. We must move into this dimension in our discussion if we would confront the real issues.

The principle of ecumenicity also relates itself to this problem. Having in our own movement created these numerous extra-biblical criteria whereby brother may be distinguished from brother, are we prepared to submit these to the ecumenical Church as a ground of unity? Our tendency to impose a double standard is all too apparent at this point. I believe it should be accepted as axiomatic that we ought to impose upon one another no condition of fellowship which we are not prepared to present to the ecumenical Church as a ground of catholicity. The same universal ground which we have sought to discover for the ecumenical Church should be sufficient ground for our own unity.

Another aspect of the problem of order is that which Dr. Owen has called "Organization." "The basis of organization is need and concern," he says. He affirms that "there is nothing basically wrong with an organization so long as it is a means to an end." An organization only "takes on the nature of evil when it becomes an end in itself." He further points out that there is no " 'Thus saith the Lord' in regard to organization and agencies." (11) With these insights I believe we all would concur.

In my judgment, however, we have some further thinking to do with reference to the relation of the Church to agencies. Some would so separate Church and agency that any relationship between them is purely accidental. Others would so identify Church and agency as to allow no distinction between the two.

In the former instance, agencies brought into being by the Church sometimes come to sustain no responsibility whatever to the Church. They may very possibly become laws unto themselves, and occasions of serious disorder among the churches, while yet laying claim to the support of the churches.

On the other hand, the identification of the Church with agencies may also lead to serious problems. Thus certain agency interest, of both the "independent" and "cooperative" variety, are considered by some to be coextensive with the Church, and fellowship is defined in terms of agency relationship.

As a consequence of these tendencies, what Christ desired to be His universal Brotherhood is sometimes divided into parties whose memberships are determined by agency loyalty. This sectarianism is compounded into schism when the several parties raise barriers between themselves which they forbid their respective members to cross. Anyone who feels constrained by the love of Christ to ignore these man-made fences may well be subjected to that most vicious and unfair treatment called "condemnation by association."

Now I should like to suggest as we consider this problem that we remember two things: First, there is no human agency as catholic as the Church. Second a brotherhood is not made up of agencies, but of brothers.

What then is the solution to this problem of the relation of the Church to agencies? Might I suggest that it may well be found in the persons of Christian men—the brothers who comprise the Brotherhood. These have accepted God's Given as it is in the Church. A part of that Given is mission. In their faith and concern they may respond to the demands of that mission by creating agencies through which it may be fulfilled. These agencies are valid to the extent they serve the purpose which called them into being. For this reason, while the agencies are not the Church Given, they are most certainly related to the Church in the **persons** whose fellowship with Christ leads them to implement His commission by a particular means.

In my thinking, therefore, the Church is neither to be completely identified with, nor separated from, the agencies. I believe there is that in the Church which is Given, and which is consequently changeless and universal. But I also believe there is that which is constituted by response to the Given. This response may change from era to era as Christian men seek to mediate the Given to their world.

There is then what one might call the "Church Given" and the "Church Responsive." The first is the realm of order; the second the realm of agencies. The first is faith accepting the Given; the second is faith responding to the Given in the expedient. The "Church Given" is one; the "Church Responsive" is diverse.

Now our fellowship is rooted in common acceptance of the Given. It is in this our unity consists. But granted that acceptance, we ought never to allow diversity in the "Church Responsive" to constitute schism. Brethren may well feel obliged to cooperate together in common response to the Given, but freedom must always be maintained in which the Holy Spirit may move them to new responses.

There remains, however, one question in this connection: What is the Given? I believe in consultations such as this we must answer this question. I would define the Given as the Holy Spirit, the Gospel, and the order which embodies them. Dr. Owen has noted that, while the Gospel remains unchanged, "the church as a human institution changes with each society and generation in which it lives." This is of course true, if by "human institution" is not meant the order which exhibits the Gospel. We must remember that the Church of Christ can never so change that it ceases to embody the Gospel, for it is created, sustained, and judged by the Gospel.

Indeed, I am convinced that were we to give ourselves carefully to a fresh exploration of the relation of the Gospel to the Church, a number of our difficulties would be solved. Certainly, one of the most serious occasions of tension and disorder among us — the problem of "open membership" so called—can only be solved in a unitive fashion by such a study.

A not uncommon sentiment is reflected in the statement that congregations have the "right and responsibility" to "determine their membership" in accordance with their "character and faith." (12) But this is only true if congregations always submit their faith to the judgment of the Gospel, while not ignoring the concensus of sister churches. I do not believe that any congregation is qualified to judge itself by itself.

It then behooves the Church to hear the Gospel. What **does** it say concerning this issue? If we abandon the cause of truth we are indeed undone. But if we are sincere disciples we will diligently seek the truth, following it wherever it leads. And being willing to let truth reign in the Church, our unity will be preserved.

A final consideration in the area of Order is that which involves what Dr. Owen has called "Unification." In his words, "Independency and separation in life of our brotherhood have made it difficult for this brotherhood to make a significant witness and take its part in the world mission of the church." (13)

I deeply share this expression of sorrow over our tendency toward fragmentation, and the manner in which this has weakened our witness. I am sure we all agree that our message to the Christian world can only regain its power as we regain our unity. At the same time it seems evident to many that our institutional life may well need reformation "in the light of the Gospel" and the needs of our generation. (14)

But what is this "principle of unification"? It is evidently of singular

importance, for Dr. Owen says, "Increasingly we are coming to realize that we cannot become a true brotherhood until we go beyond association, cooperation, coordination, into what we call now unification." (15)

I must confess concern in contemplation of these terms, and I believe in such consultations as this we should enjoy a free sharing of understandings in this regard. What, for instance, is meant by the term "true brotherhood?" Have we not been—are we not now—members of the true Brotherhood of Christ? Perhaps this usage serves to point up an increasing tendency to use the term "Brotherhood" in a denominational sense, for which we are to be judged. There is one Brotherhood of Christ in which we are honored to share, and it is its realization in our common life that I cherish.

It remains further to inquire what is meant by the term "unification." Is this proposed structure simply a more effective, comprehensive, and efficient organization of the **bene esse** of the Church? Or is it to be considered the **esse** of the Church, in which case it becomes definitive of our identity and fellowship?

Again, if this "unification" is designed to enhance the fellowship of **all,** or of only some of Christ's brethren? To achieve this "unification" are some of the brethren to be considered "expendables?" Or is it contemplated that such "unification" will enhance that interpenetration of the lives of all saints, as the Father is in Christ, and He in the Father?

Indeed, it would seem that we need seriously to re-examine our concepts of unity. From my present vantage point (and I confess it is a limited one) I can see how some among us would become impatient with others who seem to feel that we possess all truth, and that unity is quite simply accomplished by joining **us.** Thus our first plea to the religious world to join **with** us in following Christ in order to achieve unity with one another has been sectarianized.

But is institutionalism the answer to sectarianism? Institutions may well **express** the fellowship which we have in Christ and thus enhance the unity of the Church. But when institutions have been made definitive of fellowship, where in the history of the Church have they ever been unitive? Have they not rather tended to limit the fellowship of Christ and to bind the human spirit as it's faith responds to the Word of God? I should think that men of all shades of opinion within our movement who treasure our freedom of thought within the faith would view with concern any effort, from whatever quarter, to make an institutional connection definitive of fellowship.

On the other hand, if by "unification" is meant the cultivation of those spiritual qualities which make for stronger fraternity, and the use of our institutions and agencies to that end, I am much encouraged. Our agencies which represent all shades of opinion and interest among us could greatly bless our fellowship were they to become means of communication, intercessory prayer, the sharing of insights, and mutual encouragement.

The question before us, therefore, is whether in any plan of "unification" which may be conceived, our institutions will be **tests** of fellowship, or **channels** of fellowship.

It may by now be evident that we face major problems in the realm of Christian order—problems the solution of which demand the best we have to give.

Then let all of the brethren, of all schools of thought, and representing all our institutions commit themselves with earnest zeal during this decade to common occasions of fellowship, worship, study and inspiration, on national, state and local levels. Let us thus seek the mind of Christ.

In the light of our Lord's Prayer, have we any other alternative?

## II
## AUTHORITY

In such considerations as these, Dr. Owen quite properly believes the nature of authority to be "crucial." (16) It is obvious that if people appeal to different criteria or sources of authority, they may with equal honesty come to different conclusions. When such conclusions become occasions of schism we are obliged to examine them both as to the authority to which they appeal and the validity of their relationship to that authority.

Now the Church has universally confessed Jesus Christ as Lord. This confession is fundamental to the unity of faith. Upon it all else rests. There may be a type of unity not based upon this confession, but it is not **Christian** unity. It is where Jesus Christ is acknowledged as Lord that men are brethren.

But from whence come schisms among brethren who with equal integrity profess allegiance to a common Lord? Such divisions appear to arise from two sources: The first is failure to understand alike the **means** through which the authority of their Lord is expressed. The second is the imposition upon others of the viewpoints we have deduced from that authority, making such deductions tests of fellowship. This latter results in a diminution of **His** authority through the assumption to ourselves of the right to author the conditions of fellowship.

Now from the very inception of our movement we have sought to avoid schisms occasioned by "opinionism," through rejection of the universal authority of individual deductions. In the Sixth Proposition of the **Declaration and Address** Thomas Campbell wrote,

> That although inferences and deductions from scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word: yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men; but in the power and veracity of God . . . (17)

In view of our present plight we would do well to subject ourselves once again to the judgment of this principle.

But what of schism occasioned by differences over the means through which the authority of Christ is conveyed? I believe we must have further conversation in this regard, for we are confronted by problems in two dimensions. The first concerns the basic Protestant-Roman Catholic difference over the authority of the Scripture as distinguished from the authority of the Church. The second involves the authority of the Scriptures themselves.

In this latter connection Dr. Owen says, "It is the Jesus of the Bible and not the Bible of Jesus that is our final authority." (18) It seems to me this statement poses alternatives which are historically impossible. We all acknowledge ultimate authority to reside in Jesus Christ. But we must always remember that He is the Jesus **of the Bible,** and that all we know of Him is discovered through the Bible. Because it conveys His authority, the Bible is authoritative, and is to be recognized as such. We must take care lest we commit the error of setting the Christ against the very Scriptures which "testify of Him."

But neither did such men as the Campbells set the Bible against the Church. They did not accept as valid this proposed alternative. They well knew that the Word of God had been entrusted to the Church, but they also knew that the Church was created by the word. They believed that since

the church was charged with the proclamation of the Word, it was granted to it to know the Word. At the same time, they understood that since the Church was created by the Word, it was to be judged by it. (19)

I believe that the authority of Christ is expressed in the Word incarnate and apostolic; that Word creates the Church and has in turn been entrusted to the Church. The Church has recognized that Word as embodied in the writings of the New Testament because it is creative. For this reason the New Testament is universally normative in the Church. (20)

Principal William Robinson has expressed it this way:

> The New Testament, which was a collection of the earliest Christian literature, differed from other Christian literature because it contained the record of the **creative** Christian experience and witnessed to the life, faith, and spirit of apostolic Christianity. That is why it was to them (early Disciple teachers) the **norm** by which all future developments in the church must be tested. As such, it was a bulwark against all subjectivisms and the guarantee of objectivity and givenness in the Christian system. It had revelance for the **creative period** of church history, which alone could have significance for what was the fundamental and peculiar genius of Christianity. (21)

But the New Testament is not normative as privately interpreted. If the meaning of human language is not privately discerned, neither is the meaning of the divine Word. The faith was "once for all delivered to the **saints"** (plural). Paul says, **"We** have the mind of Christ," and speaks of the purpose of the ministry as being "till **we all** come in the unity of the faith . . ." These are not private, but corporate or social expressions.

How is the Mind of Christ to be known today? Principal Robinson has called our attention to three criteria: 1) The whole Church; 2) in the attitude of worship; 3) under the judgment of the New Testament. (22) This distinguished scholar says that our fathers in the movement understood this concept, and I can think of no other insight which is more sorely needed among us at the present time.

What is meant by the "whole Church?" The **concensus fidelium** — the consent of the faithful, freely expressed. Thus the early Church sought the Mind of Christ in that which "seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church . . ." (23) Robinson has expressed it in the modern context as being "the considered, qualified scholarship of the church catholic." (24)

Why the criterion of worship? Because, as Robinson reminds us, "It is in worship that we come fully within the 'understanding distance,' and in this atmosphere the church can express 'a sure word of God.' " (25) It seems to me this must have been in the mind of the Commission on Restudy when in its last **Report** to the International Convention it appealed for common study and worship by all the brethren. (26)

In my judgment this concept has validity on every level of church life. How many schisms within congregations would have been avoided if their members had sought a common mind in worship under the judgment of the Word? And how many of our present occasions of division would be resolved were we as a people to increase our communication across lines of difference in direct proportion to the magnitude of those differences, and in the sharing of life in worship submit ourselves together to the judgment of the Word? What influence might we have in the ecumenical Church were we to bring to it such an insight, demonstrated in our own life?

I believe that authority so understood is of inestimable worth. It saves

us at once from the chaos of subjectivism and the slavery of institutionalism. It places the Living Word within the Living Church, and saves both from becoming petrified. It enables devotion to given truth while maintaining openness of mind to promised truth. It encourages both free inquiry and edifying fellowship. It confirms our rights as free men and our responsibilities as brethren.

Dr. Owen speaks of the principles of rediscovery and self criticism. What promises these processes hold for us if we submit ourselves to the authority of Christ in the terms described above. Would it not be thrilling to experience afresh the meaning of discipleship? The resurgence of vitality and evangelical power which would accompany such a renewed submission to the authority of Christ is difficult to comprehend.

Jesus Christ is Lord. Authority inheres in Him as the Author and Finisher of our faith. He has chosen to express His authority in Word and Act. His Word and Act are known through the New Testament. This Word and Act create the Church, and are in turn entrusted to the Church. The whole Church in worship is enlightened to know that Word as it submits itself to the judgment of the Word. The Church ought corporately to claim the promise of Jesus when He said, "He that willeth to do his will shall know the teaching." (27)

Because the authority of Christ is creative, submission to it is unitive.

## III
## PERSONALITY

Dr. Owen chooses to conclude his discussion with a consideration of the principle of "Respect for Personality." This would indeed seem appropriate, for we have seen that both Christian unity and Christian authority are essentially personal.

The high dignity with which Christ, the Son of Man, has invested humanity is evident to us all. The Christian ought therefore to excell in the respect and consideration he extends to others, especially to the household of faith.

Primary in the Christian concept of personality is the principle of stewardship. (28) "Occupy till I come" are the words of the Master to every man. Stewardship is the creative use of God's gifts in furtherance of His Kingdom. For this reason it is necessary that the steward not only be found faithful, but left free. Thus the principles of freedom and responsibility are inherent in Christian stewardship.

Nor are these principles contradictory. They are rather mutually dependent. Every free man is responsible, and only that man can be held responsible who is free. The steward must be free to exercise his gift in keeping with his fath, but he is at the same time responsible for the creative use of that gift.

Involved in the freedom and responsibility of the steward are two facts which I believe have considerable relevance to our present position. The first is that no man can relinguish his stewardship to another. Every man must give an account to his Lord for his use of life. The principle of respect for personality ought therefore to include respect for our brother's prerogatives as God' steward. He is our brother, God's steward.

Implicit in this principle is the recognition that there is such a thing as individual Christian concern—the burden which may weigh upon the heart of a man, calling him to a particular stewardship of life. Philip had his Samaria and his road to Gaza. For him there was no choice but to fulfill that ministry. Granted such commitment to Christ as Lord, we ought not to expect any man to surrender his conscientious exercise of divine stewardship in order to be acknowledged as a brother. We may indeed be constrained to enlighten or instruct one another in what appears to be "a

more excellent way," but we ought neither to transgress one another's freedom, nor deprive one another of fellowship.

We must never so structure our relationships that it becomes impossible for men to fulfill their individual concerns while remaining in the fellowship.

The second fact is that although no one can relinquish his stewardship to others, few can fulfill their stewardship without others. Although it cannot be abandoned, stewardship must often be shared. Our lives are deeply intertwined, and we partake of what might be called "a fellowship of stewardship." We are indeed "interdependent." (29) Others need our "fellowship in the Gospel" as we need theirs. This fact constitutes the legitimate foundation of cooperation and must certainly be recognized by us all.

The fellowship of stewardship is born where individual concerns meet. Here disciples share missions for which each feels personally responsible, but which only many together can fulfill. Thus each sees his life extended in creative service through others unto others. In this fellowship one is able to fulfill his stewardship through cooperation with others, while not abdicating personal responsibility for that stewardship.

In our consideration of stewardship we often speak of the proper use of **things.** This is of course a part of stewardship, but only a secondary part. Primarily, stewardship involves the right use of **life.** In this dimension it is the spiritual which is fundamental, while the material is secondary.

Much is said concerning proper financial responsibility in our missionary and educational endeavors. This concern is certainly legitimate, for when one receives a gift from others, he incurs responsibility not only unto the Lord, but unto those through whom the Lord mediated the gift. They have the right to know that it is administered responsibly.

But behind the gift of money is the faith for the sharing of which the money was given. A recipient of another's stewardship is obligated, therefore, to use that gift in a way which is both financially and morally responsible. He should not only account for the expenditure of the gift, but show that it served the purpose for which it was given.

We are not realistic if we limit our concept of responsible stewardship to the financial realm, for stewardship involves the extension of life and faith. It is possible to be fiscally responsible for the money people have given while being morally irresponsible in fulfilling the purpose for which the offering was made. It is when one receives the gift of another and exercises it thoughtlessly or unfaithfully that the fellowship of stewardship suffers. I believe candid minds will see that herein is to be found much of our problem.

We must yet face the fact, however, that there are few common enterprises which are conducted in every way completely acceptable to anyone. What then? Shall we refuse to share in any part of a common stewardship unless we can in conscience approve of all? Some among us have so refused, and have withdrawn themselves. Or, shall we insist that others share in everything if they are to be allowed fellowship in anything? Some among us have so insisted, and have excluded others. If these alternatives are all we have, can we expect much else save fragmentation, discord, and loss of our sense of mission?

I believe there is a higher ground where it is possible for brethren to fulfill one another's stewardship in all things consistent with conscience, while seeking the mind of Christ concerning that about which they differ.

In this view every person is respected in his right to seek that use of life which he considers most redemptive. All our enterprises should commend

themselves to the brotherhood in the measure whereby they make possible the most redemptive use of life. Let the merits of all our endeavors be judged in this light.

Under the authority of the Great Commission we are committed to a universal task which must never be obscured by diversities of concern and method whereby we would fulfill that task.

If we are willing to examine our institutional life, and to reform it in the light of these principles, I believe our practical problems will be solved in a unitive fashion.

A final consideration involving Christian personality is our concept of Christian fellowship. Dr. Owen has often had occasion to refer to this in his two messages, and it is certainly fundamental to the problem which confronts us. (30)

What is the essential meaning of Christian fellowship? Fellowship is the sharing of life in Christ which is made possible by the sharing of the Gospel of Christ. Christ is the central Person in Christian fellowship. It is essentially **His** fellowship. It is only ours because it is His, and we are His. If it is not His it cannot be ours. If it is His, it must be ours.

John expresses it vividly when he says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." (31)

Fellowship has two aspects: The first is its extension—the offering of life in Christ **unto** others. The second is its experience—the communion of life in Christ **with** others. If I may be allowed so to express it, the one is "Fellowship Unto" while the other is "Fellowship With."

Every Christian is obliged by the very nature of his faith to express fellowship in one of these aspects toward every human being. If a person has not accepted Christ as his Saviour and Lord, we must seek to extend the fellowship unto him through the terms of Christ's covenant. If he is in Christ, we must seek to "continue steadfastly" in fellowship with him in keeping with that same covenant.

Evangelism and worship are the highest expressions of Christian fellowship.

But we have all too often sought to find our fellowship in things other than evangelism and worship. These essential, creative, and intensely personal elements of fellowship have been replaced in much of our corporate life by various types of sterile activity which we have misnamed "fellowship." Thus we have in large measure lost both the passion of evangelism and the Presence of worship. Our need is not to define the conditions under which we will, or will not, have fellowship with one another. It is rather to renew the evangelism of Pentecost and the worship which shakes the house and renews the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Unity is the fruit of evangelism and worship. It cannot be artificially contrived, but is created by the spiritual life which flows in evangelism and worship. Our problem of "independency" or "cooperation" is far transcended in this understanding. Indeed, we are judged by our preoccupation with this issue which has vitiated both our evangelism and our worship.

Lacking these we lose all significance, and may well expect to become another of the coral reefs of Christendom—a body marked on an ecclesiastical chart, whose life has since departed.

But if we will devote ourselves anew to evangelism and worship—these activities in which the creative authority of Jesus Christ is best revealed—our order will be the creation of His handwork, and our personal relationships the results of His reconciliation.

We must repent of our sin and pray for the renewal of His Presence and His Passion.

## PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH LOCAL AUTONOMY

**Fred Thompson, Jr.**

One of the most stubborn problems confronting Christendom in our time is that of achieving a common understanding of the nature of the church. The hierarchical and institutional ecclesiologists are opposed by the hyper-congregationalists who regard the relationship between God and man as entirely unstructured and free. Several types of mediating concepts lie between these two poles. Sacraments, mission and ministry are inextricably involved in these contending theories.

At least some of the difficulties harassing the Disciples of Christ stem from basic differences in our presuppositions with respect to the doctrine of the Church. Perhaps, therefore, the most constructive approach to the problem immediately facing us—that of local congregational autonomy—is to set it afresh within the context of guiding New Testament affirmations. I am assuming in what follows the authoritative and normative character of the New Testament scriptures.

### I. The Nature of the Church According to the New Testament

#### 1. The Church as catholic.

It is clearly indicated in the New Testament that the church is the new Israel, the whole people of God. There is nothing parochial, provincial or sectarian in the **esse** of the Church of Christ. It is catholic in its mission, its message, and its membership, including men of every race and tongue who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The Church is always and everywhere essentially the same, identifiable as the "body of Christ" irrespective of the forms of culture and state in which it lives. It acknowledges one Lord receives one baptism, demonstrates one faith, worships one God and Father of us all.

Our Movement from its inception has taken the catholic stance, focusing attention on the **kerygma** and the universally acknowledged sacraments. Jesus Christ as God incarnate, the Savior and Lord of the church, has been our proclamation. The trans historical, trans-cultural unity of the church is in Him. He is the foundation and surety of its indissoluble oneness.

#### 2. The Church as Gathered.

The Church is composed of those, and only those, who respond to the call of the gospel in faithful obedience to Christ the Lord. Not only is the church catholic, it is exclusive, selective, definitive. There are no automatic procedures by application of which persons may be made members of the church without their knowledge, consent and decisive action. Men are awakened by the Holy Spirit as they hear the Word of God's grace and submit to its claim on their lives. The church is thus formed of those individuals who act upon the truth they have received and who allow themselves to be gathered into the society in whom the transforming and redeeming power of God is at work. It is an assembly, an **ecclesia**, a community, a visible entity in time and space. It is a society of the believing and the committed.

Again we note the insight of our Restoration fathers who insisted on overt and public avowals of faith on the part of all who desired to be counted members of Christ's body. Confession of faith in Christ and obedience to His Lordly rule were unvarying requirements to which all were subject. The church consists of the called, gathered and obedient children of God.

#### 3. The Church as the Worshipping Community.

The Church can only **function** as church locally. To engage men in worship and evangelism the Church must

have a location, an address. It is required to bring its members together in meeting. Hymn and prayer arise from an assembled congregation. Sacrament and sermon speak to an assembled congregation. The call to decision for Christ requires a palpable fellowship to which it may be related. Education and nurture in Christian discipleship demand a social nexus which both exemplifies and stimulates Christian growth. The sheep of God can only be fed from pastures which exist on specific landscapes.

The critical question for us here is, What is the relation between these local congregations which function as the church? Karl Barth has written a relevant paragraph on this point:

"Each community has its own locality, its own environment, tradition, language, etc. But in that locality, as established and appointed by the Lord of all the communities, it should be the one complete community. It should take itself seriously as such, and know that it is responsible as such. When this is the case, then geographical distance and difference cannot give rise to any genuine or essential difference or distance, but the community in one place can and must and will recognize itself in the community of another, and **vice versa.** The unity of the community will then be mutually attested and affirmed in spite of the differences. Everywhere the edification and ministry and mission and confession will be unanimous. But this unity, and mutual recognition in this unity, the **magnus consensus** of the **ecclesiae,** can be basically and necessarily and infallibly and unconditionally guaranteed only by the fact and each community is individually founded by the one Lord of all the communities, and that, founded in Him in obedience to His Spirit, it is continually ruled by Him. All human mediation of this unity, all the mutual understanding and agreement and coordination between the individual members, can only be a free human service. It cannot supply, let alone create, the guarantee of unity, the mutual recognition of the individual communities. This does not mean that the existence of a particular organ of mediation, an institution which demands and maintains the oneness of the locally separated communities, is completely impossible. What it does mean is that such an organ or institution is not an integral constituent of the essence of the Church. The one Church does not exist either in an ideal or in an organized or organizing totality to which the individual communities stand in the relationship of participating Churches (like the digits in a figure or the notes in a chord). The one Church exists in its totality in each of the individual communities."

**(Church Dogmatics, IV,** Pt. 1, p. 672 3)

From this very brief consideration of three strands of New Testament emphasis we may draw some obvious but important conclusions. The Church is one, consisting of local congregations everywhere functioning as the church. If we are in the church we are brethren, members of one household of faith, one brotherhood in Christ.

A second major consideration with respect to the problem of local autonomy has to do with—

**II. Inter-Congregational Relationships**

Since the church is catholic but must perform its churchly task locally, its congregations sustain vital relationships with each other. The character and forms of these relationships have occasioned much perplexity, distress and acrimony within our own communion. Disciples of Christ have historically believed in the legitimacy of agencies as cooperative instruments which may be properly employed by the congregations for the accomplishment of certain common objectives. Numerous agencies have therefore been created — and a Pandora's box of furies has been thereby opened to afflict the brotherhood.

Why? The answer lies in a difference of opinion on the nature of agencies and on the nature of fellowship.

**1. The Nature of Agencies.**

Agencies are tools which the church may devise as it deems expedient for the achievement of ends which the church determines. They are, in effect, committees of extended duration chosen by the congregations acting in concert and entrusted with specific responsibilities. Agencies are not autonomous. They are not indispensable. They do not inhere in the **esse** of the Church. They are instruments which may be used as long as they serve the purpose of the church.

Agencies are subject to the control of the church. The foregoing is a theological and not an historical statement. In practice agencies frequently ignore the sentiment of the congregations which created and endowed them. Sometimes this is largely the fault of the congregations themselves which fail to be articulate in their wishes with respect to the work of their agencies. C. C. Morrison has written trenchantly on both of these points:

"One would expect, in the case of a denomination which makes high claim for the autonomy and independence of the local church, that its local churches would desire and assert their democratic right to participate effectively in directing the operations of these agencies. It does not appear that they have such a desire. At any rate, they allow a great mass meeting, consisting of those members of their churches who wish to attend . . . to hear reports of the agencies and approve decisions made by ad hoc committees or by the agencies themselves. Only a small fraction of the local churches are 'represented' in these mass meetings which are always overloaded by those from the churches in the immediate region where the convention is held. This loose and relatively irresponsible procedure is the basis on which the claim of superior democracy is made. But it is not truly democratic. It results inevitably in the concentration of responsibility in the hands of those who are interested in exercising it. Not infrequently, this has resulted in the virtual control of the policies of the whole denomination by an elite group.

To claim that its churches are free in such a system is an affront to democratic intelligence. They can be truly free only in a system in which the delegated or representative principle inherent in democracy is provided by a polity that evokes from the grass roots of the local churches their advice and consent."

(**The Unfinished Reformation,** p. 181)

It is the concentration of power in the hands of a relatively few agency people which many of us fear. Manipulation of the brotherhood is not overly difficult if an elite group has control of convention machinery and the organs of publication. In this case the agencies guide and effectively control the destinies of those congregations whose cooperation they solicit.

Further, in a brotherhood practicing congregational polity, it is difficult for some to understand how an agency or a congeries of agencies can become "official" instruments of the churches. Why should it be deemed sufficient reason upon which to request funds for its work that a given organ is "our brotherhood agency"? Do the congregations have no right to examine and evaluate their agencies, to decide that this one merits their support and that one does not? Is there any valid appeal which can come from any agency to its constituting congregations on any other basis than merit?

I am entirely willing to acknowledge the sorrowful inadequacies of the "independent" forms of activity within our brotherhood life. But at least one is not required to contribute to **every** independent cause just for the reason that it is independent. It is of the essence of sectarianism to describe

the Disciples of Christ in terms of the co-operation or non-cooperation of congregations in the work of agencies which have nothing to do with the constitution of the church.

At this point a personal observation is in order. It does not seem to me that our churches and our ministers grind nearly so sharp an axe on the agency issue as the agency officials themselves. One of the psychological hazards of serving an organization is the exaggeration of its position in the mind of the employee until the part becomes identified with the whole. Agency personnel are fiercely dedicated to the preservation and expansion of their agencies—a commendable attitude so long as it does not excise from the brotherhood those whose enthusiams for this particular service is more moderate.

We are not the only Christian communion which has experienced gastric distress over this internal disorder. P. T. Forsyth lectured his fellow Congregationalists over this matter a half century ago:

"What is asked of us is asked of every church which does not set up a monopoly of exclusive foundation and divine right. Are you, with your methods and organizations, well calculated to serve in a distinctive way the Gospel that God has given, and to secure its authority? Is Congregationalism, worked as it is for practical purposes by the majority principle, able to keep the trust, and put out to interest the capital, of a Gospel which creates and maintains a church as the supreme agent on earth of the kingdom of Heaven? Is such a Congregationalism able to guard and exercise this one trust given by God to men for the realisation of the New Humanity; especially when the Word is unpopular, and disappoints the people rather than win them? Can its majorities be trusted to keep the faith, the word, and the power once for all committed to the faithful, and to keep it whether it succeed or not? Majorities may be naturally religious; they are not naturally Christian. Can a church which must, by its structure, be largely exercised in obtaining majorities for its necessary occasions and decisions, have the real presence and guidance of the Spirit which in history has mostly mocked majorities and worked by martyrdoms?"

**(Faith Freedom and the Future,** p 208)

Forsyth pleads for the Church to respect and love its minorities, even those which are un-cooperative, and to refuse to ignore them. Our contention is that agencies are not the church and should not be made the test of fellowship between brethren. As Professor DeGroot observes in listing the items needed in a genuine restoration of N. T. Christianity, "The vision of ends, or aims, or purposes, rather thany any deification or ossification of means to those ends must be our first restoration objective."

**(The Restoration Principle,** p. 169)
Agencies are means, not ends and should be evaluated proportionately.

**2. The Nature of Fellowship.**

Brethren in the Lord are called to share a common life. They have fellowship with the Son and they have fellowship with all who have been resurrected to new life in Him. It is unscriptural, unbrotherly and unthinkable to regard or treat as aliens those who are members of the same family of faith.

Unhappily, it has become apparent that much of our difficulty in practicing brotherhood rises out of significantly different concepts of the Christian faith to which we are committed. Our problems are not really problems of polity and organization, not independency versus Unified Promotion, but of doctrine. One writer has stated the issue very clearly—

"The growth of institutionalism and centralization of power are posing fundamental questions for the traditional individualism and democracy of the local congregation . . .

Actually, the real question is not so much cooperation and non-cooperation but one more profoundly theological . . .

The growing realm of science and technology and the general empirical and naturalistic mood of the day let loose in the Disciples overt and incipient forces. One school of thought held that the Locke-Campbell tradition made the new thought a 'natural' and 'at home' expression for the Disciples. In fact they asserted such a naturalistic interpretation of religion was the very genius of the Disciples.

"The progressive view of the scriptures, revelation, and supernaturalistic and traditional aspects of religion undermined the authoritarian basis for the remaining ordinances of the church such as baptism. At the same time a certain sociological point of view gave impetus to the organizational aspect of a growing 'denomination' as a natural and normal sociological phenomenon.

" . . . The cooperative majority of the Disciples is no longer stirred by the naturalistic debate. The advocates of naturalism have retired from the scene. The present intoxication is 'ecumenism,' not in its theological sense but in its organizational sense. They are in the block stage of building, not now, at least, willing to sit and think.

"The cooperatives, paying lip service to supernaturalism yet living in and accepting a naturalistic age, are having increasing indigestion in their organizational and institutional aspects. They are besieged with committees and minute-taking. Whenever two or three cooperatives gather together they immediately establish a board, elect officers and see what percentage money is available. The only reason the Holy Spirit is not present is because he fears being put on a committee.

"Ecumenism rather than being accepted in the profundity that it requires is apt to be a faddish diversion adhered to in the name of the unity tradition of the Disciples. The cooperative group is confronted with the dilemma that it is neither orthodox nor unorthodox but merely cooperative. Intellectually and theologically it is becoming sterile.

"The cooperatives, as has been previously suggested, stand in a paradox. Working within a supernaturalistic tradition they behave as products of a naturalistic age. Professional positions among them are becoming established and being filled by many youth of naturalistic training. The absorbing problems of the present have to do with the development of patterns of organization and programs of stewardship to support such patterns. It is producing clever, 'copy-cat' preachers but few real thinkers to challenge the group philosophically or prophetically. The tradition of unity leads them easily into the current ecumenical discussions and planning. However, they find their way into such discussions on the level of their present preoccupation, that of patterns and organizations, boards and secretaries. The cooperatives are a denomination in all the sociological aspects of that term but like the Methodists, the Congregationalists, and the Northern Baptists have no contemporary thought life or theological basis."

(John Emory McCaw in a thesis for B. D. degree, 1949, U. of Chicago, **Formula and Freedom Among the Disciples of Christ.**)

This evaluation of the cooperative section of the brotherhood is too severe and ungenerous. Nevertheless, it expresses what many conservatives have long been troubled about—that theological liberalism has become the lens through which the leaders in the schools and agencies view the scriptures and our own position in the Christian world. Not until liberal motifs were accepted as guide lines to an understanding of the Christian re-

ligion did there arise those within our ranks calling the concept of restoration illusory, divisive and impossible. Now it is the fashion to speak contemptuously of the restoration ideal in some Disciple circles.

Congregational autonomy provides the local church with an effective means of expressing disapproval of theological deviations from our historic platform by permitting it to withhold financial support from offending organizations. Within the framework of our understanding of the Biblical doctrine of the church, the congregation should have that right. The local church cannot and should not be coerced into giving assistance to enterprises in which it has no confidence. Still, Christians have no right self-righteously to judge as unchristian those **brethren** who do maintain fellowship with such works. They remain within the one Church which shelters us all.

Thirdly, the whole matter involves—

### III. A Question of Attitude

The internal stresses straining the seams of our brotherhood fabric are basically a matter of attitude. Do we have a genuine will to be a united people? Are we really distressed over our estrangement and loss of contact? Are we willing to accept the obligations and limitations of a free people in Christ to the fullest possible extent —so that we will love one another and respect one another notwithstanding our very great differences? Even while contending over doctrinal issues on which we sharply disagree, can we not remain cordial and kind in our relationships?

If we treasure our congregationalism in order that we may go our separate ways in stubborn indifferences to the life of the brotherhood we stigmatize ourselves as traducers of a great heritage. We prove ourselves unwilling to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. We give the lie to our loud protestations concerning the oneness of the body of Christ.

If, on the other hand, we define our movement in artificial terms which elevate means and subordinate ends, we commit ourselves to crass sectarianism.

It is not easy for autonomous local churches to keep from falling into the pit of anarchical independency on the one side or the bog of sectarian exclusivism on the other. Christian grace and Christian wisdom are required to keep us on the narrow way. But if we center our faith in Christ and determine to be affectionately loyal to our brethren in Him we may avoid both hazards. P. T. Forsyth has a pertinent word in this connection:

"In proportion as the Church is divided up, i.e. as stress is laid on the local and congregational element in it rather than the universal, so much the more stress must be laid on the common faith, if the idea of a church, its unity, and its right to the comity of their churches, are to be cherished at all. The local association must be balanced by the common confession, tacit or explicit. We have never stood for absolute and unchartered liberty." **(Faith, Freedom and the Future,** p 216)

The one body must be made apparent by our incarnating the one Spirit, the authentic and universal credential of the Christian. We are men under orders, serving under the compulsion of the gospel in the Name of One who commands us all. It is not our responsibility to judge our brothers. It is our responsibility to preach and teach the message of eternal salvation to the whole lost race of men. And it is our obligation to love all who are similarly engaged.

In conclusion, we cite Forsyth again:

"The great question before us, therefore, is not connected with **our** work or **our** machinery for the Christianising of society, but with God's. And it is the question whether we can prove in practice that an aggregate of small and separate churches is equal to a

charge so great and integral as the first trust God has committed to the Church for the world—the trusteeship of His only means for Christianizing society and effecting His kingdom—His historic, apostolic, final, universal, and eternal Gospel."
**(Ibid,** pp 217-218)

## LOCAL ANTONOMY

### W. B. Blakemore

I accepted the invitation to come to this consultation because the topic that I was asked to comment upon is the topic of local autonomy as it was developed by Fred Thompson. As he has indicated I have not had an opportunity to see the paper that he has presented this afternoon. What I have had at hand is the paper which he presented two years ago, and it is in terms of that statement with respect to local autonomy, that I am addressing you. I think that he would probably still stand by virtually every thing that is in that statement because I have heard him say nothing today that would contradict anything that is in that statement.

I am also very glad that early in our deliberations here I heard the statement made that the question, "What think ye of Christ" is a question of very different order from the question, "Are you an "independent" or "cooperative"?" Of course it is, and all of us recognize that! And the facts of the case are that there have been so many first principles stated today with which I agree, and with which all of us would agree, that we all have to recognize that our disagreements are not at the level of first principles. But something happens between the question "What think ye of Christ?" and the question "Are you 'independents' or 'cooperatives'?'; and you cannot dismiss that question—"Are you 'independents' or 'cooperatives' "—by constantly elevating the question. "What think ye of Christ?", because after we get our unity in Christ asserted in terms of our statement that He is the one to whom we owe all allegiance, we still find out that we are embroiled in the practical things that have to do as to whether or not we are "independents" or cooepratives." I think there is no use in dodging the fact or in being blind to the fact that this is the circumstance and the situation in which we are, and, as was suggested this morning, the best thing is to get through to an honest discussion about what are some of the things that are troubling us in this way.

Now in between the question "What think ye of Christ?" and "Are you 'independents' or cooperatives'?" something happens. It is between there somewhere that the difficulties begin, and my exploration this afternoon is going to be almost entirely in that middle ground, and somewhat perhaps a little bit closer to the bottom side of that middle than it is to the top side of that middle. Actually, Fred Thompson's paper of two years ago gives me a very good opportunity to speak in that way.

I think that I do have to say that I am convinced, (and perhaps this is one of the points at which there is a very great difference between some of us), that as you move from first principles toward practical action that it is never possible to get to practical action (and nobody ever has) without having some admixture of human thought, belief and philosophy. Now I say this because I am quite sure that at one stage in his career Alexander Campbell, if not Thomas Campbell, thought that it was possible to get through to some kind of fully practical statement which could be free of this kind of admixture of which I have spoken. And when he put out his first edition of the **Christian System** in 1835, in the preface that he wrote to that first edition, he was so bold as to say that on the basis of the inquiries that he and his comrades had been making that they had arrived at the absolutely correct and unalloyed kind of statement of that kind. By the time in 1841 or so

that he got around to the second edition, if there ever was a second edition or at least the third edition, he was saying that he was presenting only what they had for the consideration of other people and he was no longer making that kind of claim. Now the facts of the case are that I do believe, and I know that a great many people in our brotherhood believe, that "simon-pure" statements at the practical level are not possible. We have our truth in earthen vessels to the glory of God. We can never speak without being men. Therefore, one of the chief duties that we have as we are trying to speak religiously is to examine ourselves, find out what kind of theology and philosophies, etc., actually have influenced our thinking. This was the significance of the discovery that the Campbells had been much influenced by Lockean thought. They were also much influenced by Scottish philosophy, and if you really examine Alexander Campbell's thought you will discover that there is a great deal of Calvinism in it. And one of the things that is going on in the present time in some of our schools is the discovery of this Calvinistic aspect that is undeniably there. The idea of a sort of a pristine, pure way of speaking, free of being earthen vessels, simply cannot be held. Now, you may feel different about it, and this may point to a very real difference between us in the long run. But I want to turn my attention from that and take up this paper of Mr. Thompson's of a couple of years ago.

I might first say that I think some statement that he has in there about the fact that I have presented a kind of a Presbyterianism as a panacea of all ills I do not quite understand. I never suggested anything as a panacea, much less Presbyterianism. Although, I have published a paper (mimeographed is what it is,) in which I presented a position that is equally critical of congregationalism, presbyterianism, and episcopacy. I think until the Christian Church gets through discussing its polity problems in those three terms it is stuck forever. We have got to get through to something that transcends this eternal going, and going, and going around on congregationalism, presbyterianism and episcopacy, and I think I am going to present you something that may help to get a little beyond it.

But let us look at this matter of local autonomy. Let me make one more preparatory statement. I am always interested in speaking on this topic, in one sense, from the standpoint of the sociology of ideas because you cannot in any of the writing of our people find the term local autonomy before about 1908 or 1910. In other words this is a term which we have come to use within this century. Now the term has been applied to some aspects of our practice all the way through. But this term local autonomy is a very interesting piece of patchwork. The term autonomy was invented, I think, in modern times by the German sociologist Max Weber who took a couple of Greek terms, auto and nomous, "self law," put them together, and then some where along the line somebody, evidently amongst the churches, added the term local, so that by the time of 1908 or 1910 you get the use of this term local autonomy to try and describe things that earlier had been described in terms of local independence, or the independency of a congregation. Several years ago I wrote an article that was published in the **Christian-Evangelist,** I think it was called "Autonomy, No, Independency, Yes," and what I was trying to do there was to clarify the fact that actually I think this term autonomy has pulled us in directions that did not inhere in the old notion of independence. And a lot of this pull that has come to us by virtue of this very twentieth century word, autonomy, is because it sounds a little like the word authority. (By the way, the fact that this term autonomy is used and is so precious amongst us is

an evidence of the thing that I was saying earlier — you cannot get through to practical discussions without being involved in terms that are of human derivation and making.)

Let's look at this matter of local autonomy as Fred Thompson presented it. First I want to point out the vast areas of agreement that I had with the presentation that he made. With respect to local autonomy I acknowledge with him and affirm with him the autonomy of the local congregation with respect to its own affairs. Absolutely with respect to local concerns there is local autonomy for the local congregation. Now I also agree pretty well with Mr. Thompson's list of those things that belong to the local congregation, and those things therefore over which the local congregation certainly has control and should have control. The first of these, of course (and the one that has been affirmed historically the longest, not only by all our churches but also by the Congregationalists and by the Baptists), is the right of the local congregation to select its own minister. I would say if there is any one thing that is the schema of what is called congregational policy it is this, that the local congregation has the right to select its own pastor.

Secondly, Fred Thompson and I seem to be agreed on the fact that it is within the proper sphere of the local congregation to order its own worship and that nobody from the outside or no eccleastical authority anywhere else or anything of the kind can tell the congregation what it should do about its own worship.

Thirdly, it is certainly within the proper sphere of the local congregation to have the pastoral care of its membership and to be able to exercise the pastoral care of its membership. There is no denying this fact and in this nation we have the pastoral care of the membership in the local church and it never dawned on us to even question it and perhaps put it in the list. Of course, if you lived in Russia today it would be a different matter because one of the liberties that the church has lost in Russia is the right of the pastoral care of its membership. This is very, very restricted and the World Council of Churches included the pastoral care of a membership as being one of the things that rightfully belongs to a church in the report that it made.

Forthly, another thing that obviously belongs within the realm of the local church is the Christian education of its own young people. You and I today do not have any difficulty about this, but about one hundred years ago or more there were a number of people in churches that belonged within this "Campbellite" stream (or whatever you want to call it) who were objecting to the introduction of the Sunday School. I do not think that there is a church in our midst any longer that does not have a Sunday School, and yet there was a time when people said that this was not something that should happen and were not allowing it as being within the realm of the local church.

Now I certainly agree with Fred Thompson that the selection of its own minister, the ordering of its own worship, the pastoral care of its membership, and the Christian education of its young people belong to the local congregation, and with respect to these things local autonomy should prevail. But I also agree with Mr. Thompson that there are functions of which the local congregation is incapable and, therefore, there are some things which fall outside of the proper sphere of the local congregation .These things he has made quite clear in the paper which he wrote two years ago. One thing that he asserts that belongs outside of the sphere of the local congregation is the selection—now watch this very carefully—of those who are to be ordained. Now he did not say that the act of ordination belongs to anything other than the local congregation. And in that respect I agree

with him, but he makes quite a plea in that paper of two years ago that there be some kind of process established whereby the selection of those to be ordained be recognized as belonging to a sphere that is something other than the local congregation, and I agree with him in this distinction. I would also like to suggest that actually in the establishment of state commissions on the ministry we have been trying to do for thirty years exactly what he asks be done now in that paper; that is, that some standards of selection for the ministry be set up and the matter of selecting these ministers not be left in the hands of the local congregation. I go along with that because my father was a minister of Churches of Christ in Australia for a period of some 15 years and, as a boy, I learned the fact that amongst those churches there was a ministerial association which was given the right of veto over the entrance of any man into the ministry of the church. Given the right to veto! They exercised it in only one regard; they exercised it with respect not to doctrine but with respect to the moral character and reputation of the man. This it seems to me, is the kind of minimum safeguard that does lie outside the sphere of the local congregation.

Secondly, Mr. Thompson indicates, and I agree with him, that the education of the ministry is beyond the scope and ability of the local congregation, and therefore, it is necessary to have schools of some kind in order that the education of the ministry can go on.

Thirdly, Mr. Thompson indicates and I agree and I think so far as I can tell that all of you do, that it is beyond the ability of the local congregation to provide opportunity for supra-congregational fellowship, (I did not say super-congregational, I said supra). It is impossible for the local congregation to provide opportunity for fellowship at a range wider than the local congregation; and, therefore, a number of kinds of conventions have come into existence, the North American Christian Convention, the International Convention, the World Convention, and might I point to this consultation which is an opportunity that one single local congregation could not provide and so far as I know this is just a sort of spontaneous free upspringing together of a number of people who are interested in something. I do not think this meeting was authorized by any particular congregation or group of congregations. I do not think that a group of congregations constituted this consultation any more than a group of congregations constituted virtually any of the associations that you were talking about. This is a misidentification of history, to say that the agencies were constituted by the churches; they were not. That is one of the interesting problems with respect to all kinds of agency-life whether you consider yourself an "independent" or a cooperative."

There is another area in which Mr. Thompson and I and a number of other people at least seem to be agreed, and that is that the world mission of the church is beyond the scope of the local congregation. The world mission of the church is beyond the ability of the local congregation. I think that the existence of something like the Christian Missionary Fellowship, and the emergence of that kind of structure is an indication of that point of view. That is, I think the matters is no longer simply a matter of independency versus organized missions. The real question in this regard is the adequacy of the United Christian Missionary Society to the World Christian Mission. And I know that I share the point of view of vast numbers of people when I talk about the inadequacy of the United Christian Missionary Society to the World Christian Mission. There are vast numbers of us who have been supporters of this United Christian Missionary Society who have been very

restless with the fact that it has not been able to move rapidly enough in order to express the fact that there is nothing adequate to the world mission of the church less than a total unified missionary effort on the part of everybody who considers himself a Christian.

I have just come back from India and I have never in my life had my soul plowed up by the actual scene of this desparate situation in which half a nation is living at a pre-Exodus level of the Spirit in which, as a report of the World Council of Churches said, there are those who are so subjected to drudgery and to poverty and to racial discrimination that like the Israelites of old they hearken not because of anguish of soul and cruel bondage. And believe you me, there is a monumental job of spiritual upbuilding to bring these people to the level where they can even hear the words of the gospel before we can begin to talk about missionary effort in anything that is respectful of the term of carrying on the world mission of the church. The United Christian Missionary Society at least is under all kinds of pressure to get on with the job of finding the ways in which, by cooperating through the kinds of organizations that we have had in the North American Council of Foreign missions, in the International Missionary Council and now in the World Council of Churches, it might become part of something that begins to measure the size of the problem. Stewardship together is not a matter of your concern and mine meeting each other. Stewardship together is a matter of you and I both standing in judgment before the worlds needs, and making some structural organization that can begin to get in there and do the job. The reason that I support the United Christian Missionary Society amongst our agencies is that it is miles ahead of anybody else in knowing the size of the job.

Now there is one function, (the point I was making here is that fundamentally Mr. Thompson and I seem to be in agreement that the world mission of the church is something beyond the ability of a particular congregation,) on which we seem to be somewhat divided; as to where responsibility belongs. I believe that the basis of membership in the congregation is a matter that is within the sphere of local autonomy. Mr. Thompson does not. Mr. Thompson believes that the matter of the basis of membership in the church is something that is outside the autonomy of the local congregation. I believe that if a congregation wishes to exclude from its membership those who profess faith and obedience to Christ but have not been immersed that the church has the right to exclude them from its membership.

Now there are therefore some matters that are within the sphere of local autonomy and some which are outside the sphere of local autonomy. When a local congregation abrogates to itself, not only those functions and authorities belonging to the local congregation, but abrogates to itself also those functions and authorities that are outside of its sphere it has committed what C. C. Morrison calls the "sin of churchism". The "sin of churchism" is also described in that book from which you are quoting. When C. C. Morrison was talking about the denominational system he said the facts of the case are that the denominations have committed sin and it is this sin that brings about division. They have committed what he called the "sin of churchism". The "sin of churchism" is the abrogation by a denomination of those things which belong to the whole church of Christ! I contend that it is also possible for local congregations to commit the "sin of churchism" when they abrogate to themselves things that belong to the whole church of Christ.

I feel that we ough to deny the term church to anything but the whole

church of Christ, somewhat in the way in which our British brethren do. I think that we ought to recognize that the local congregation ought to be called a local congregation, perhaps, and not be called a local church. A building such as the one in which we are meeting might be more appropriately called a chapel rather than a church. It is not a bad practice the British brethren have at this point; and I think it is a little bit ironical that I may be the only person in the room who ministers regularly in a situation in which the group of people who meet are not called a church, but is called a chapel, and where we do not even have any membership role. This is Rockefeller Memorial Chapel at the University of Chicago. I am not saying that it is a good manifestation, however, of the Christian Church, or the Church of Christ. But I think that what we have to recognize is that we have to be very, very careful in the way in which we baptize any empirical entity on earth with the term church." The church of Christ on earth is essentially, intentially and constitutionally one, consisting of all those in every place who confess their faith in Christ and obedience to Him." Brother Thompson, I cannot accept that definition of the church that you gave as being something about the collection of all the local churches. You had something toward the end in which you defined the church. I have to go back to this other definition; I cannot define the church of Christ in terms of a collectivity of local congregations. I can only define it, as the whole company of all those in every place who profess their faith and obedience to Christ.

Well, since there are functions beyond the local congregation there must be structures to fulfill these functions. And, actually, amongst both groups, "independents" and "cooperatives"—these have appeared. There are schools of prophets on both sides. There are supra-local assemblies for conventions and consultations on both sides. (Consultations, I suppose, together.) There are procedures for the selection of the ministry. These structures have come into existence. By the way, sometimes some of us who would claim to be on the cooperative side have a great deal of difficulty in listening to some of the things the independents say because some times they talk as if they did not have any structures. You see? Now, fifteen years ago I used to run into this a lot on both sides of the fence, and we are not going to get anywhere unless we are honest about the fact that we have had to embody in various kinds of ways, and you have just as much structure on one side almost as on the other.

The question is can we find some middle principles of organization that can help us give an effective practical embodiment to this kind of supra-local congregationalism. I really do not have time to go into this, and yet I would like very quickly to present a couple of things that I believe are in the area of human thinking that tend to get us embroiled. Now, one of these is: In what sense, when we are talking about the church of Christ, what do we identify these days as being the fundamental unit of the church of Christ? Underlying most contemporary congregationalist ideaology or thought in this century is the notion that in Christianity it is the congregation that is the fundamental unit. This means that from the congregationalist point of view today one presupposes that all thinking about religious organization begins by accepting the local congregation as fundamental. The local congregations are the foundation of every thing else and on which every thing else stands, so to speak. Now I want to remark in passing that this kind of emphasis upon the local congregation is a twentieth century characteristic. In the nineteenth century there would have been much more of a tendency to assert that the Christian individual is

the fundamental unit, and that the church comes into existence by gathering together individual Christians in the name of Christ. You were saying this kind of thing a little while ago and I thoroughly and honestly believe it. It is the individual Christian and not the local congregation that is the fundamental unit. No, I'll even take that back. It is the whole church of Christ that is the fundamental unit in the long run. But the individual Christian is equally as important as is the local congregation, and local autonomy has to do with the sphere of things that belong to the local congregation. And there are some things that belong to the private sphere between a man and his God and no local congregation has any right to step on my toes with respect to the things that belong in my personal autonomy. But I have no right to force on a particular congregation my ideas because I have some area of autonomy. Our whole problem, brethren, is to discover wherein is the local congregation autonomous, wherein has it no abilities and therefore no rights, and how are these functions to be accomplished. But local autonomy is not this all-over thing that we sometimes get. I do not think that I need to say anything more about that. But it is a very interesting thing that in this twentieth century even the church, by and large, has gone over to this communal notion of what is the fundamental unit. If there is any where that this stress upon the individual ought to be made in this day and age, it is in the churches.

Now, another idea that I would like to say just a word about is the fact that we are always constantly, just as human beings, likely to think that if there is power the power must have all originated in some one place, and that any power that exists anywhere comes about because it has sort of been moved from one spot to another by a process called delegation, or something of this kind. It simply presupposes that rights, powers and responsibilities are derived from somewhere, and that there is a singularity of location with respect to that somewhere. Because of this presupposition the political debate (and therefore the debate with respect to ecclessiastical policy) has for the greatest part of history been a repititious and doleful argument regarding whether the power and authority originate at the top and proceed down or whether they originate at the bottom and proceed up. In episcopacy of all sorts the dominate notion is that powers originate in God, descend to the vicar of Christ or to the episcopacy, and then down through priests and deacon to the people, who only exercise such powers as have been delegated to them from above. The congregationalist point of view claims to be more democratic; power and authority originate in God who has delegated them to the "people", the "people" delegate them up through congregations and associations, the ministry at local and general executive levels is thought of as having only such powers as have been granted by the people. Whatever is the fundamental unit tends also to be thought of as the single source from which all powers within the church derive. Now, I do not want to go on with that. As far as I am concerned the fundamental unit is the whole church of Christ which is not to be identified with any particular structure that exists on earth now except as it includes everybody. Fellowship, in that kind of sense, with the Christian individual, the local congregation, or any kind of associations and orders that may exist are inside this whole church of Christ and in someway participate in it. No specific organization is prior to a local congregation when it emerges, but we must assert that what is prior is that very concrete entity the church of Christ on earth, that whole church of Christ you were hearing about this morning.

I am sorry I am having to condense here, (and I probably have already said enough,) but the other thing that

I do want to say has to do with the fact that power constantly comes into existence in our human situation when people join together in association. I do, if you will bear with me a moment, want to get across this point of view. I want to return to the idea that in the act of association for the fulfillment of a function new powers, abilities, responsibilities and authority are created. This understanding points to the fact that an act of association or cooperation is actually productive of new power which did not exist before the act of cooperation. It points toward the possibility of getting things done that cannot be done apart from cooperation. If one local congregation alone cannot carry on the world missionary program, but can carry on a service of worship, two congregations standing side by side, but not in cooperation, cannot carry on that missionary program though they will succeed in providing worship for twice as many persons. Three local congregations standing side by side, but not in cooperation, cannot yet carry on that missionary program but they will succeed in providing worship for three times as many people. Certainly, there will always be an increase in the number of things that local congregations can do as long as you can keep on just increasing local congregations, but until the act of association comes they do not have the power to do the things that can be done by association. When association occurs there takes place something that is more than the sum of the parts. This is what is fundamentally wrong with independency. When things begin to associate and cooperate it is not a matter of one plus one equals two, it is a matter of a new level of power that begins to come into existence. New power and new abilities actually come into existence. Our churches have not been bereft of a sense that an act of association creates new power. I do not have the reference immediately at hand but in some history of the Disciples of Christ there is an account of an effort of about 1870 to form or increase the state missionary work. The argument against the action was that it would provide power which would be subject to abuse. In what was an obviously impassioned reply the proponent for the scheme cried out, "Are we always to be so afraid of abuse of power that we cannot fail to lay hands on it." Now, this is still the question. Power is there, but unless we lay hold on it the power we will have will be ineffectual. Unless we work constantly to keep our hearts pure we will be corrupted by the power, and we have to face this fact. If we fail to lay hold on the power we will never have the instrumentality that God has put in our presence to get the job done. But unless in coming together and creating the power we recognize also that all power can corrupt, and that we have to protect ourselves against that kind of corruption, we will be corrupted by the power. But this is the freedom of man; this is the way God has made us; this is our fundamental character and condition; and this is why we cannot fail to be in cooperation.

I want to say one thing in closing, and this may sound a little bit harsh to some of you, but it has to do with the fact that I considered whether or not to come. I read over what Dale Fiers had to say a couple of years ago, and Dale Fiers took the position that there is plenty of structure on both sides (and we might as well admit there is plenty of structure on both sides, you see, let's get that honest with each other.) Then he said he did not see the way through really to any kind of fellowship, or something of the kind. However, he held that he did have faith that, with God, what is impossible with man, is possible, and he ended on that note. Now I am going to go a little bit farther and indicate what I think is a kind of possibility, and this may not be the answer. My presence here does not mean that in any way am I going to

disregard the obligations, responsibilities and pledges which, as a member of the Disciples of Christ, I have, through a magnificent number of relationships with church councils, church federations and of which churches, which I am a member of, have at the local, the state, the national, and the world level. We have entered into all kinds of obligations with each other as a people. There was the term used this morning "sister churches." Brethren, the church of which I am a member has "sister churches" that bear the term Congregational, that bear the term Presbyterian, and that bear the term Methodist. In this day and age we have even found our sisterhood with some churches that bear the term Orthodox, and there is even a slight little hint that maybe there is going to be something sisterly out of Brother John the twenty-third. Now inside the ecumenical movement there is not a single question that has been raised in this consultation that is not a live question within the ecumenical movement. The same kind of differences that divide the "independents" and the "cooperatives" inside this consultation exist inside the ecumenical movement. That is why I do not quite like the fact that this is called an Internal Consultation, because as far as I am concerned it is not any more internal than some conversations I have had with people in other denominations, and I am not going to be distracted from engagement in that enterprise by this one. I am not going to get myself involved in the mistake that the Baptists made in 1953 when they backed away from conversations with us saying, "We have got to go and patch up our own situation first." The Baptist are not any closer to a patch-up of their situation now than they were then. Fortunately the American Baptist have stayed in full cooperation inside the ecumenical movement. As far as I am concerned I expect that the best answering of all of these questions we have had today is ultimately going to be found in the larger context of the whole ecumenical movement, and I urge you to find your way in it. If you think you are blocked by agencies now, get into cooperation with your other sister churches and, if necessary, firm up your own structural character so that you have some kind of structure for getting in there, because the only way you can ever get a "cooperative" into conversation with the rest of the Christian brotherhood around the world is by some kind of structure in order to get it done. I must close by saying this, that I am absolutely convinced that at New Delhi the Holy Spirit was operative. We transcended in a magnificent fellowship all of these kinds of differences that we are talking about. The Holy Spirit was there, and I can do nothing to deny that Spirit, otherwise I damage my own soul. If I feel that the Holy Spirit is also present in this consultation, God willing, I will be back.

## ISSUES THAT DIVIDE CONGREGATIONS

**Henry E. Hill**

What are the issues which divide preachers and then congregations? It is possible to delineate the differences among our people simply for the sake of listing. Having listed them, we could then consider our job finished and sit down.

We could say that our understanding of the terms "New Testament Christianity" and "Ecumenicity" is a cause for dissension. If New Testament Christianity means to many a dead church, then ecumenicity means to others a floating into the wild blue yonder where there is not sufficient gravity to pull us back to earth.

Liberalism and conservatism are two forces which are battling it out among us. Liberalism is said to be dead, but this is only partially correct. Though the fountain may be dry, its waters are still running their course. "Liberalism is dead but liberals are

still abive" is a more nearly true statement, but still not wholly true because liberalism is always trying to make new surges behind neo-faces. And, too, the liberals say that the conservatism of some among us is merely a pose for static faith.

What shall we say for those who once wrought more righteousness together than separately? With the writer of the Hebrew letter we could say time would fail us to tell of every little victory in division and dissension among us. We could speak of doctrines overcome by private opinions, we could speak of matters of expediency which have been installed as dogmas. We could speak of basic literature, conferences and camps, organization or no organization. It is hoped that there is more real unity among us than most of us admit and that this conference will help to focus attention on our common strength. Could it be possible that the personal pride of a few extremists and extremist institutions in both the liberal and conservative camps are kicking up more fusses than are really fussable and seeking to maintain their pre-eminence in their circles of influence? In the Conference on Internal Unity in Indianapolis three years ago, one of our committees agreed the members of congregations are generally unaware of many of the issues.

We could speak of our lack of respect and our abundance of condemnation of our brothers. We could make something of our differences in theological training. We could brand our seminaries as liberal institutions which take away the faith of honest scholars, or brand our Bible colleges as institutions who have a scarcity of educated teachers with advanced degrees. But in all of these areas we might have to re-write our opinion later, when we have learned to separate the shady areas from the sunny.

I would like to group our problems into three areas which, I am convinced cover most of the categories where tension and misunderstanding threaten our unity.

## I. THE AREA OF THE PARADOXICAL HALF

We have not used the word "paradox" very much but it is a good word and conveys a meaning which cannot be neglected any longer because it is highly relevant to many of our problems. Even though the paradoxical is seldom popular, we ministers are not in a popularity contest and must preach and teach the whole rather than the half of truth. Many resent paradoxical preaching because it causes them to think upon the whole of truth rather than on the half they desire to hold, but this does not decrease the minister's and teacher's responsibility to teach truth within the context of the whole.

So far as I am able to ascertain, the word "paradox" is used only once in the New Testament, but this is often enough to give us a basis for a few or many remarks. It is used in connection with the healing of the paralytic after he had been lowered through the ceiling to the presence of Jesus. A rough, literal translation of Luke 5:26 might be this: "And ecstasy took possession of all and they magnified God, and holy terror took complete possession of their minds as they said, We have seen paradox today.' "

Paradox means contrary to opinion, something strange, unbelievable and yet true, incredible except to those of spiritual eyes and honest hearts, unexpected, uncommon, wonderful. That God is in Jesus the Christ is a paradox. The faith is filled with paradoxical truth.

It is said that Dean Mathews once described paradox as "one-half of a truth so stated as to irritate those who hold the other half." (1) And Christopher Morley says: "the intellectual growth of humanity is shown by its increasing tolerance of the paradox. The greatest of all paradoxers

was crucified. Every true paradox is a little parable of human fallibility . . . (The paradox) dignifies human nature by assuming that the mind is capable of reviewing itself in the refraction of absurdity. Thoughtless people speak of the paradox as a reduction to absurdity. That is not so. There are some subjects that have to be elevated to absurdity." (2)

Perhaps if we could elevate some of our problems to the light of truth we might see the absurdity in the half truths we hold. Our lack of appreciation for whole truth causes us to withhold the love we owe others who hold the other half of truth. Withholding this love results in split personality or schizophrenia. We may live in our own little world of security, oblivious that in the world of others they have the other part of what we need to live.

Merely because something is contrary to my opinion—or is paradoxical—is no sign it is false. Some large concepts our fathers held we have reduced to fit our minds. Our classical position on liberty in opinion is almost extinct in practice. It has become like the Jayhawk, once called by Pogo, "a genuine mythological bird." It is quite possible for us to array opinions against each other which are really two elements of brotherhood seeking their rightful unity. There are some differences among us that are paradoxical and should not be differences at all.

Can we, for example, conceive of a New Testament Christianity that is not also Ecumenical Christianity, or i m a g i n e Ecumenical Christianity which is not New Testament Christianity? The possibilities of one without the other are grotesque. Yet, we have men acting as though these terms have nothing basically to do with the other; when they are like love and marriage, "You can't have one without the other." There are churches who would cease to listen to a preacher who talked of ecumenicity and many of their members would not be caught dead with an ecumenical pamphlet on their persons. They think oikoumene is one of the kingdoms Satan promised Jesus if He could only worship at the devil's shrine.

The word "Oikoumene" is used at least twice in the New Testament and means the scope of the whole earth or world. In the Hebrew letter it refers to the state of affairs that will exist when Christ returns from heaven. Our fathers would have rejoiced to see the day when there would be ecumenical conferences in Christendom. But faith of our fathers is too often our fathers' faith and not ours. For we are not always of the spiritual maturity to be as they were. Our fathers might have voiced their criticism of the Ecumenical Movement and the World Council of Churches, but they would have been close enough to the leaders of that movement to bring their opinions to bear on its direction and content. We criticize it to one another while ecumenical leaders in the world scarcely know we exist. The logical question is, "If we have a witness to world Christianity are we not hiding it under a bushel" (or, as the new British translation says: "meal tub," whatever that is!) Is our frame of reference today large enough to make a contribution to ecumenicity? Our fathers could have answered yes. I'm not so sure about ourselves. For we have thought training is more important than education.

On the other hand, those who despise the term, "New Testament Christianity" would do well to notice that the best of scholarship in the seminaries of our world today are not hesitant to talk about New Testament Christianity. They are speaking our language after we have grown tired of holding to many elements of the truth. Thomas Campbell would be quite happy to know that Randolph Crump Miller of Yale made this statement: "The only place where we can

find the church pictured in the New Testament is within the local congregation . . . If we can come to an understanding of the nature of the Church, beginning with the picture drawn in the New Testament, and then seek by God's grace to reproduce the essence of the Church's nature in the local congregation, we can provide a community in which a Christian educational influence will prevail . . . There is an authority resident in the first century of the history of the Church which provides a norm for future development." (3)

Some will say Dr. Miller doesn't go all the way. To be sure, he does not and may never. Neither did Thomas Campbell, however, when he wrote the Declaration and Address. But his basic commitment led him to be baptized, among many other things.

What is true ecumenicity if it is not a search after New Testament Christianity? And what ever made anyone think he can have New Testament Christianity and, at the same time, stifle his ecumenical privilege and responsibility? The New Testament Church is the innermost which must some day be outermost and truly ecumenical. The New Testament church, local, and the Ecumenical or Catholic Church, universal, side by side are paradoxical or "against the opinion." Even so, it takes the two to tango. The paradoxical half is not good enough; it is sub-Christian.

Consider, too, the situation which evokes the terms "cooperative" and "independent." These, too, are contrary to opinion, strange, incredible. Are we not derisively called "middle-of-the-roaders" when we say that churches can really be both independent and cooperative?

The church is universal in direction but it is local first. Again, we quote Randolph Miller: ". . . in times of stress and strain, when the Church is not sure of its function in the world or when its function seems to have shifted from the major emphasis in the New Testament, it is necessary to take stock, and to look again at the nature of the Church and to discover how to find the Church in the local congregation." (4)

This, necessarily, connotes a certain kind of independency. Long before there could be an International Convention of Churches (Disciples of Asia, Africa and Europe) or a national convention, there was the church. And this is not to say that conventions are not desirable or even necessary.

Admittedly, there is a balance within the tension of independency and cooperation. These words ought not to be abused as we have abused them. They are fighting or "party" words to many and these things ought not to be.

Relative to independency and cooperation is the problem of missions. Dr. Mackay, until recently President of Princeton Theological Seminary, not long ago intimated that we must have an answer to the question, "What does Mission—Mission of any kind—mean?" He admits missions is larger than whether they have independent or cooperative sponsorships. He sees the danger of the independent missionary withdrawing himself from the world of which his hearers are a part and the danger of missionaries being controlled by ecclesiastic societies who have lost their evangelistic zeal. He says we have been more successful in achieving ORDER than in creating and sponsoring ARDOR. (5)

Cooperation, in the New Testament sense, allows for diversity. Dr. Mackay was surprised to find that the Church of England has a dozen or more societies for missions.

We need to remember that cooperation does not mean conformity on surface levels and independency does not mean isolation on any level. Independency is the difference between the desires of Paul and Barnabus whose personality differences did not cause them to preach another gospel when

they went different ways. They were still in the way; therefore, they were in the cooperative faith.

Cooperation and independency bear the same relationship to one another as individuality and community. Many of our problems have resulted in not knowing how to relate individuality and community and these problems can only be solved by love of the Christ and one another. But we want a coin with two heads or two tails. We desire a world with two north poles or two south poles, and we defeat ourselves by insisting on this little thinking. Independency and cooperation belong under the same roof just as they belong and are considerably exercised in your very house. We do need to set the limits whereby independency does not thwart the Lord or community and where cooperation does not become forced conformity.

There is an interesting situation in Wichita relative to this very point. Recently a number of churches of the "cooperative" persuasion judged themselves not a part of the churches which did not come under the new Christian Church Commission. Because some of us did not conform, these churches withdrew from the advertisement box in the Saturday Eagle and Beacon. Now, there are two advertisement boxes, both saying "Christian Churches." The total weight of the twelve relegates the weight of the six to the lightweight category of pragmatic inferiority. Not every "cooperative" church agreed to this system which gives propaganda advantage to the many and it was a surprise when some saw their own church listed in the new box. Does this new advertisement technique mean that the faith of some of us is qualitatively different from the others? Or, is it a public admission that we in the Christian Churches do not tolerate differences because we do not appreciate the paradoxical element in the whole of faith's expression? We know, of course, that "independents" have been known to exclude "cooperatives." This time, however, it happens to be the other way around.

Of course, if we hold to paradoxical halves, these we have mentioned and others that might be among us, let us be ready to be incarcerated in the institution that treats paranoia. It is against the mind, not intelligent, to accept halves of truth that at first are against our opinion. How many of us are willing to admit we are ill? We ought to be as willing to accept the whole truth as those who saw Jesus heal the paralytic. Let us look at that verse again: "An ecstasy took possession of all and they magnified God; and a holy terror took complete possession of their minds as they said, 'We have seen paradox today!' "

Ectasy and divine terror are twin children of paradox. Ecstasy here "ekstasis" means, according to the Greek lexicon: "A throwing of the mind out of its normal state . . . so that in this rapt condition, although he is awake, his mind is so drawn off from all surrounding objects and wholly fixed on things divine that he sees nothing but the forms and images lying within, and thinks that he perceives with his bodily eyes and ears realities shown him by God." (6) In other words, ectasy is an amazing, out-of-this-world experience though you are still in the world with feet solidly on the ground. We need this brand of ecstasy today.

Holy terror is a fear, not like you would feel when caught speeding, but the kind of awe akin to that which Peter felt when he fell down before Jesus and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Perhaps he felt, as someone has suggested, that he would corrupt Jesus if he touched Him with carnal hands. It was a holy reverence that pierced to the marrow bone. We need to stand before God once again in this kind of holy terror. If we did, we would accept paradox and eliminate the dissensions which are not really differences in principle. Christian ecstasy or transcendence is lacking among us. So is rever-

ential awe. These twins lack health because we cannot appreciate the whole truth of paradox.

## II NOW LET US LOOK AT THE AREA OF THE IDOLATROUS WHOLE

We may fall into this error because we have identified ourselves exclusively with the paradoxical half. We should have followed honest doubts until we saw the absurdity of our position. But if we were going to hold to our position, come heaven or high water, we couldn't afford to doubt, though doubt is a good thing when it is employed within the faith. If I am satisfied with half truth, it is a sin to doubt that I have the whole. But good honest doubt often saves us from fanaticism. Have you not seen men who, when they were forced to see some inconsistencies in their positions, took the other extreme? Then, once they were in the other extreme of thinking they couldn't afford to doubt the validity of what they now embraced. They couldn't think paradoxically. Others are waiting in this attitude: "As for me, I don't know which side of this thing I'm on, but you can be sure that once I do decide I'm going to be bitter about it." Political parties often insist on a blanket endorsement of their candidates but we cannot blindly give this endorsement and be good citizens of country or kingdom.

When we suppress our doubts instead of thinking them through we develop a good case of fanaticism. It is a fanatical faith that is unwilling to answer questions relative to it. Between paradoxical halves there is room for doubt, because doubt about our inadequate positions is merely a search for depth. Suppression of doubt causes fanaticism, and fanaticism is closely akin to idolatry.

In Eugene O'Neill's drama, "The Iceman Cometh," Larry, an alcoholic, sitting in a bar, says to another: "I was born condemned to be one of those who has to see all sides of a question. When you're damned like that, the questions multiply for you until in the end it's all question and no answer. As history proves, to be a worldly success at anything . . . you have to wear blinkers like a horse and see only straight in front of you." (7)

You might well expect an alocholic who has lost all hope to be afraid of seeing all sides of a question. For, when he sees that which he does not desire to see, reformation of his own character might be required. But, having suppressed his finer self, he keeps it submerged only by a quiet fanaticism that drives him to oceans of alcohol. To suppress elements of truth which we do not wish to admit, will necessarily make us not only fanatical but idolatrous.

The classical movement of the Disciples of Christ was born out of a desire to see all sides of a question. Our forefathers did not wish to worship the God half-truth. They could walk around a situation and see it for what it was without the fear of giving up something. They knew that the essential element of idolatry was elevating partial or half-truth above the whole truth. One hundred years ago we were a challenge to the religious world because we desired to stand on universal ground. The plea of Jesus that we might be one took possession of our very hearts. We dreamed of unity or oneness, but not simply as amalgamation of denominations, not as a cheap brand of togetherness, or familiarity without real fraternity. Our fellowship would be based on a genuine humility which bowed its knees before Him who said, "I am the truth." Our desire was unity in the very heart of faith in order that such things as missionary methods might not become a camel to push us out of our tents. Realizing that denominational Christianity was not all bad, we appealed to the denominational world to search with us for universal

ground in order that the prayer of Jesus might be answered—that we might be the priests who would intercede for our high priest, since He cannot accomplish unity without His people.

The first major defection in this movement was caused by making instrumental music a test of fellowship. No instrument became more important than fellowship. This has become so dangerously close to the idolatrous today that the members of the Church of Christ, non-instrumental, have no more freedom to preach without that movement's basic interpretation of music than the Mormons have to disregard the book of Mormon or Christian Scientists have to disregard "Science and Health with a Key to the Scriptures." Imagine, if you can, a faith subservient to No Instrument.

Now we are threatened by other idolatries. Independency and cooperation can very easily become idolatrous when they assume such proportions that we will divide brother from brother to uphold our own opinion that we must be either independent or cooperative exclusively. Either or both of these loyalties become idolatrous when they become as important as faith in the Christ Himself. We could say the same thing about the Ecumenical and New Testament Church relationship.

A deep symptom of our idolatrous tendency is manifest in the desire to make Christ's fellowship one that is very neat, one where we experience no tension. If we can only make the plea of Jesus merely a pipe dream and get lost in a provincial fellowship of fellow-imbibers of oblivious forgetfulness, then we can say with O'Neill's character, Larry, that not only our yesterdays but our tomorrows as well are not a care to us any more. But have we not learned that real understandings come out of tensions, that new dimensions of fellowship come out of the grace to find a truth together? If we desire to separate from our brothers and be independent of them, exhibiting the attitude of exclusiveness that pats a few of us on the back, we might well lose salvation. Or, if we desire to cooperate with others, especially those outside our own brotherhood—cooperate to the extent that we get lost in a larger group and accept their way of life, we merely exchange old tensions for new ones and perhaps lose ourselves. If we could arrive at better insights we might be a healing influence not only to ourselves but others in the larger scope. Then a merger might help the Kingdom. We must not equate bigness with goodness and we should make relatively certain that a merger would not only increase togetherness but real fellowship.

Idolatry develops where love is negligent.

. . . Love is not love
Which alters when its alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove;
O, No! It is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom. (8)

So far as I am concerned this is the way we are to love one another. Christian love is the law of friendly persuasion.

Is the plea of our Lord now only a pipe dream to us? It takes a good set of blinkers to look straight ahead without reference to the prayer of Jesus that we might all be one. It takes blinkers to form a judgment that diversity in methods must give way to conformity. When we damn good methods, independent or organized, we diminish the message and tell it in not full force. God forbid that we should consider the how more important than the why and the substance of our message.

## III AREA OF DOCTRINAL DIVERGENCE

Someone asks, "Is our problem really defined when we define and discuss independency and cooperation?" The answer is "No." Independents are cooperative in a thousand ways. They have many mission boards, many Bible college boards, publishing committees, Evangelistic associations. Because they do not cooperate with one society or another does not mean they are independent of others. The fact is that I hear little about independency from many of those who used the term very freely a short while ago, and they are loath to be called Independents. On the other hand, cooperatives are often the most independent of persons. Many of them are independent thinkers although they give their money through certain approved agencies.

Then, why use these terms? I hope we don't forever. I hope we do not always hide behind terms to evade the deeper issues. So long as these terms are generally accepted to represent elements of division, I suppose we need to use them, but we need also to direct our attention to the real problem areas.

So many of our friends, both independent or cooperative, today admit to us that our real problems are basically doctrinal. It might be better to use the terms liberal and conservative, but even then we would need to bear in mind that all cooperatives are not theologically liberal. Liberalism isn't what it used to be and conservatism is not always what it ought to be. We can be safe in saying that the element of liberalism is predominantly within the cooperative framework, having found its way into agency life of the brotherhood.

Garrison and DeGroot freely admit that "the issues which were still disturbing the unity of the Disciples in 1948 all have some of their roots in the higher criticism controversy." These authors say that higher criticism did not gain a prominent place among us until 1892 and the opening of the University of Chicago. They say further: "A new era of frank commitment to liberalism, but still within the ranks of the Disciples, began in 1908, when Charles Chayton Morrison" bought **The Christian Century.** And in 1911 Dr. Morrison ran a series of articles urging open membership.(9)

It would take a long time to discuss all of the liberalism that has been among us and we do not have this time here. The Cooperative-Independent issue grows out of the Baptism-Open Membership issue and this grows out of a basic understanding or misunderstanding of revelation and the nature of the Lordship of the Christ.

In 1820 Alexander Campbell said in his debate with Walker: ". . . read your Bible—the New Testament of the Lord and Savior reveals his will, **his whole will,** concerning his own kingdom. What you read there, believe and practice." (10) Though higher criticism has made many claims it has still not made a dent in the Good News. Even so, some think that the revelation of God is still being given. If the open-membership advocates do not have some further revelation that supercedes the New Testament, how do they support their liberal doctrines? Certainly no one will argue open-membership on the basis of old or new revelation; that is, no authority for it is quoted. Either Jesus has final word or He does not. It is really a question of who is boss. And, I do not mean to imply that the conservatives always let Jesus rule. They, often, have been Pharisaical in their insistence of the letter while their agape (love) was lacking. In addition to this, they sometimes have been slow to grasp the insights within the context of the whole truth.

When we make a close examination of the scripture we might conclude that God is still revealing Himself within the context of the written word. If so, it has been inherent in Jesus

Christ from the beginning. If liberalism would concern itself with what is inherent in the Christ we would be happy; and if conservatism would always adhere to sound principles and preserve what is established, how blessed we would be. A liberal is liable to see something that is not truth and without the context of the Word and a conservative is apt to not see the full implications in the truth.

When you consider Webster's definition of liberal and conservative there is not so much difference as you might imagine. Conservation means the maintenance of resources. A conservator is one who preserves from injury or violation; a conservative is one who is moderate and within safe bounds, one who adheres to sound principle, and conservatism is the disposition to preserve what is established.

A liberal is an independent. It is often translated "free." One who is free from bondage, from corrupt desires. A liberal is one who has intellectual freedom, one who is liberated. Where in this definition do we get a permission to insert doctrines that are not within the context of truth? Liberty or freedom never meant license—fancied liberty to do as one pleases. We are called to liberty or freedom (Gal. 5:13). This liberty does not encourage us to hurt God and others but to love and help them.

Men change words by usage, however, and the word "liberal" has changed. The liberal movement in the Protestant world and in our own brotherhood has jumped out of freedom into license too often. This is blatant independency, independent of the context of truth, and moving toward bondage. Conservatism has sometimes moved into the realm of the static and has failed to see the possibilities in the Living Word. It sometimes has fallen into a rigid fundamentalism that tends to isolate itself from the dynamic Christ.

I certainly hope that the Biblical scholarship of the denominational world will help to rescue us from not seeing enough in the Bible and from seeing more than is inherent there.

The Word is liberal—that is, free and waiting for us to explore its meaning. And God wants us to be free to pursue it. It was a liberal discovery when Martin Luther discovered the scripture which said the righteous shall live by faith—liberal because he dug it out in spite of a static doctrine which practically equated works with faith. But it was conservative as respects the real word of God. Luther simply maintained the natural resources by bringing them to light.

The Bible is full of insights that break upon the world from time to time. As John Robinson said to the Pilgrim Fathers, "The Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth out of his Word." (11) To his contemporaries, Walter Scott was a liberal when he gave an invitation based on Acts 2:38, and he was free to do it. But he was conserving truth. Liberals are free to pursue truth and bring to us new insights that are covered by the "accruing embarrassments of intervening ages." But they are not free, within the context of revelation, to admit the unimmersed into membership of the church.

Is it possible that we could have a liberalism and conservatism that pursues the same end? Jesus was thought by the Pharisees to be a liberal; but when he transformed the old commandments and put into them what the Pharisees had lost sight of, He was merely being conservative as regards the preservation of truth. "You have heard it said, but I say . . ."

Persons with liberal tendencies could profitably spend their time finding the hidden gems of salvation and could turn loose the sword of the Spirit which will go forth to heal. Karl Barth is a liberal to some but he is really conserving truth when he says that infant baptism is a mistake and

should be abolished since baptism presupposes a response of a believer.

And conservative persons need to get on with the real maintenance of neglected resources. Possibilities inherent in the Word are not yet exhausted and cannot be made so by casual quoting of scripture. Truth is not exhausted by quoting scripture else boys old enough to read could staff our pulpits. The Greek and Hebrew lexicons are gold mines of riches to be conserved, and we are losing them by neglect. Because of their too casual **familiarity** with scripture, persons may never be shaken by the word, and truth may remain alien to them. After all, the best sermons may yet be preached and the best seminary may yet be developed. It has been said of John Webster, English dramatist of around 1600: "Webster reset other people's jewels and redoubled their lustre." (12) We need to reset and enhance the luster of the jewels of truth.

The "saints" have often hoarded the truth or presented it so that it does not appear desirable. The way to conserve truth is to examine it anew and appropriate its inexhaustible implications. Conservative scholarship must search for foundations that are covered by the rubble of sectarian neglect and for splendid stones which have been removed from the foundation. When liberals do not explore **ancient** truth they are as much in error as those fundamentalists who have entombed the living word of God. The superstructures of liberalism or "correct" conservatism are sure to fall because both foundations are faulty.

Conservatives must seek the possibilities inherent in the Christ. Maintaining the status quo is not the same as true conservation. Time disintegrates the status quo or gives opportunity for it to be transformed. Real pioneering is necessary in the study of God's Word and we must not justify our lack of pioneering spirit by the truth that we are afraid of our associates, liberal or conservative. Who wants to go through the only life he will ever live on earth as a part of a status quo that is way under par? The Pharisees were dead sure they had the faith when they were dead and without faith. The status quo crucified Jesus and may crucify Him afresh.

"Our little systems have ther day." Any time we think we have it all in a nutshell without further study and further application of truth in a changing world, truth will leave us behind. When we search for implications inherent in the truth, however, future generations will say: "Why did it take the world so long to see this basic truth?" Being a true conservative means keeping up with the Christ whose word is not exhausted by the understanding of any or all generations. This is the reason vital reforms are necessary through history.

My prayer is that liberal persons and conservative persons might get on with finding the inexhaustible implications of the revelation once for all delivered to the s a i n t s. After all, the greatest thing that will ever happen on earth has already happened. The gospel facts represent the climax of the age, not only the beginning. In Jesus Christ time is fused with all the meaning that it will ever contain and anything in time which does not relate to the Christ Himself is sentenced to death. The crisis is that light has come into the world. The high point of history has already been reached. The crisis is already past. When Jesus comes again it will be as the denounement — only the resolution and final disposition of the era that was born, sustained and inspired by the Christ who died, was buried, arose, ascended, has come back in the person of the Holy Spirit and will come back in a visible manner one day.

## CONCLUSION

I fear that all have been too deeply affected by the pragmatic methods

of our time. We have been utilitarian, seeking to know more how to do things than what to do. We have employed the very best methods but have left the Spirit of God out. We wonder sometimes if we have any place for the Holy Spirit. Our real hope cannot be realized without His presence.

Carl F. H. Henry recently interviewed Dr. Charles Malik, Lebanese Ambassador to the U.N. and currently a professor in The American University in Washington. He asked: "How can the Christian remnant recover an apostolic initiative in witnessing to the world?" To this Malik answered:

"Not by magic; not by a clever trick; not by mechanical techniques which call for a special conference at six in the morning and another at eleven; not by many of the ways suggested in American theological literature, with their emphasis on methods and techniques of worship and of invoking the Holy Spirit; not by mass organization simply. But especially by ardent prayer for the Holy Spirit to come mightily into the hearts of men. That is the most important thing. Jesus did not concern himself mainly with "how to organize," although this is most important for the continuity of the Church. Do you think that mass organization without the inclusion of the Holy Spirit, with all its grace and freedom and power, can withstand the smash of the Communist offensive? Not at all!"

Malik continues: " In the field of Christian unity there are great signs of hope, I believe. I am encouraged by the awakening of people as a result of suffering and the sense of danger, and by the way people are giving themselves once again to the discussion of fundamental questions. The greatest possibility for a breakthrough exists in prayer for the coming of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is, as it were, now knocking at the door, fluttering around about us on every oscasion. We must open the door. To the extent that people ardently pray for his coming—well, that is the greatest victory we can hope for, the coming of the Holy Spirit." (13)

Dear friends, the Holy Spirit can help us solve our problems if we are humble—if we have a balance between God-reliance and self-reliance.

### Notes


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## SPECIFIC ISSUES FACED BY LOCAL CHUURCHES

Charles F. Arnold

There is an ancient legend that when the Army of Pharoah was drowned beneath the avenging waters of the Red Sea, the ministering Angels danced out before the throne of God and cried in anticipation and joy:

"Let us sing a Victory Song."

And God said: "My children lie drowned in the Sea and you want to sing?"

It isn't easy, even for us who claim to be Christians, to accept as fact that the soldiers of Pharoah were God's children too. But they were and we ought to be reminded every day of our lives, particularly when we do or say anything that puts us in two armed camps, attacking one another with our proselyting, that every war is a Civil War to God. And we ought to be more careful about putting him into our priestly and ecclesiastical divisions as men and women of the church than we ought to be careful about putting him on the bridge of our battleships, at the controls of our bombers, or on the bench at the Nuremburg war trials.

And every quarrel is a family quarrel to God and, if the quarrel results in a divided family where each must live in a separate house and worship at a separate altar, God suffers most of all.

In the early day of our movement our purpose and our plea was for unity, but we sought out many inventions. And most of the things which bring us division and pain, I fear, are the inventions of our minds and not the product of the mind of Christ.

There is no place where our divisions hurt us more than in the local church where people must come to a common altar and partake of the common love feast of the Holy Communion. For when we come to that sacred place of saving memory we are warned to first lay down those things we have against one another or they will interfere with His communion with us. What a tragedy if the church itself were to be guilty of making the communion of the saints an impossibility, and the memory of Christ's expiatory death a farce. This must not be and yet it is a real threat if we try to approach His table without first taking what steps we can to have Fellowship with one another.

It is the disruption of the Fellowship at home base that frightens me; it is the danger that after inviting others into the high and holy Fellowship of Christian Unity, we might ourselves be cast away. We must know what things divide us, and we must be willing to do what we can to understand one another and to have fellowship with one another, whatever we find those things to be. I am a pastor and I have a pastor's concern. I do not want my local congregation set at one another's throats by issues which ought to be fought out on some other battleground and in an element of holy love.

What are the issues which divide us before the Communion Table of Christ in the local church? They are demands made upon us by life itself and our response to these demands will determine the power and effectiveness of the witness of the local church to its own members and to the total Christian Community.

### I. OUR RESPONSE TO THE DEMAND OF OURSELVES

We are different. No one can say with certainty what he would do if we were suddenly warned that an atomic attack were under way or that The Bomb had fallen on Oklahoma City. But of one thing we can be sure, we should all act differently. And our responses to the realities about us depend upon more and deeper dynamics than the words that come to us from the pulpit, the agencies, or the teacher in the church school.

All the trouble we have with one another or between groups stems from our perception of reality as opposed to the perception of reality by others, as opposed to what reality really is; something which no one knows.

By their very nature, some people cannot live without the protection of the group. Stand them out in the world of reality alone and they become panicy and frustrated. They cannot work except within the framework of the class, the circle, or the committee. They are always organizing new groups to do things and you never find them doing anything alone. We cannot deny them the Fellowship of the church because of this. But project this tendency into a large area and you find this person seeking the protection of the group at the state, national, and international level. But this should be no cause for division.

Others, by their very nature, find it difficult to work within the group. They are the Lone Rangers. They are against involvement in any group for any purpose. They fear its encroachment upon their freedom and what they call their independence. They resent the United Nations, NATO, alliances with foreign powers, Federal interference with the rights of the states, councils of churches, ministerial alliances, and they tend to see a communist under every bed and a threat in every organization . . . but their own. They do not work well on boards, in committees, or in classes unless they can find a group with which they can identify in every way without any compromise or surrender at all. The least friction or opposition is a threat to them. But we cannot deny them Fellowship and we should not make this cause for division.

There are also those who make their response primarily at an intellectual level and those who make their response at primarily an emotional level. The intellectual response tends to react toward a thing with what he calls logic or reason. The emotional tends to react against a thing by the way he "feels." He is apt to feel first and reason afterward, if at all, while the intellectual is apt to reason first and then allow his feelings to participate if at all. If either of these stop at their primary level of response, it can appear to be, and well might become, a serious difference in their point of view and thus their final conclusion on any matter. We should not, indeed we must not, allow this to become a cause of division or an excuse to break or deny the Fellowship.

So, the response to the demands of ourselves, when viewed at the local level, seems to be tolerated with some success, at least in those areas where it must be tolerated. (If for no other reason for a purely economic one: otherwise there could be no church there at all.) But when we begin to try to tolerate two groups who fit in any of these categories we seem to run into a great deal of highly charged difficulties. To solve these difficulties, we need to glance now at

## II. OUR RESPONSE TO THE DEMAND OF THE BROTHERHOOD

We are not bottles in the rain each waiting to be filled for himself alone however much we try to assert our independence. We are not completely separate entities each with the right or privilege to act or stand alone. We are joined together as a race (as distinguished from animals), the human race, and we ought to be joined together by the love of God in Christ. Under the fatherood of God this ought to result in a Brotherhood of man. It doesn't have to mean, as indeed brotherhood at any level on earth does not mean, that we agree on everything; in fact it doesn't have to mean that we agree on anything . . . except the Brotherhood. But it most surely means that we have to agree on that or deny that we are the children of God.

But Brotherhood makes demands, as any normal family relationship does,

and we have no right to refuse those demands and still claim to be a part of the universal family of God.

The autonomy of the local church is something which gets hazier even ephemeral the closer you inspect it. And yet we, by harping on it at the local level, make it a source of division. Stand off at a distance and it is easy to see. Get in close and you begin to wonder if it exists at all. One is forced to wonder just which is the stronger connextional tie; constitutional unity, such as the episcopal type church possesses, or the connextional ties of a Brotherhood of Love which we claim to possess.

If we have one hundred (100) persons here in a group it can have some kind of autonomy. If we have a thousand (1000) they can have some kind of autonomy. But what happens if we take these same one thousand persons and divide them into ten groups of one hundred each? Have we by dividing them into ten separate groups also severed the tie that bound them together when they were only one? From this point of view, local autonomy is an illusion. Our responsibility to one another, under the demand of the Holy Love of the Brotherood, transcends it. We ought to be able to pull together however many different local, autonomous groups we might for expediency become. For our division must be for expediency alone or it is a division at a level too deep to tolerate. Anything that violates the Brotherhood violates the Spirit of God and is a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit for it is a denial that He can produce this unity of Spirit in us while we serve Him from differing points of view and in different areas of service. And Jesus had some strong words to say about this kind of conduct misleading and offending the young and innocent of mind and spirit who do not know what the quarrel means. Autonomy may be important, I suppose it is, but it is not that important.

Membership in the local church is just as difficult to define and defend. Have you ever tried to sit down with your church roll and try to defend yourself or your secretary for assuming, and thus admitting, that each one on the roll is a member of the church of Jesus Christ and thus entitled to your full Fellowship, and then glance at the list of the other churches of Jesus Christ in your community and try to justify your reasons for not having full fellowship with them? Every church has on its membership record the names of persons who are farther from the Kingdom of Christ, by His own definition, than any Hindu, Buddhist, or Mohammedan. That's why Jesus defined the citizens of His Kingdom with the reminder that not every one who named Him as Lord was in the Kingdom.

Your church financial secretary has a much more nearly accurate roster of Christians than the mailing list your secretary keeps in the office desk and calls the Church Roll. And we know it. Yet we do not make stewardship a test of Fellowship and Jesus talked about little else.

Well, perhaps we might draw the line at Hindus and Buddhists, but as long as the Lord adds to the church we ought to be most careful about assuming that we are the keepers of the Lamb's Book of Life. I think we assume too much authority when we decide who is and is not in the Fellowship. At least we ought to examine with great care the standard by which we make this decision, particularly when we deny Fellowship on the basis of a certain disagreement which might eventually be resolved by talking about it in Christian understanding and Love. It is hard to convince one that you love him while you deny him the Fellowship.

It is impossible to talk about the Brotherhood without bringing up the point of domination by the agencies. This is one of the big bug-a-boos that

one hears so much about, and which is most alarming to the uninitiate in the local church.

First let me say that I do not know exactly what this means for I have never seen an example of it. I can, of course, speak only for myself. I have held some positions in the International convention and no agency tried to dominate me. I have served many times on the Committee on Recommendations, which is the International Convention, and I have never had an agency come into a sub-committee meeting and try to dominate anybody. I have been Chairman of a sub-committee of the Committee on Recommendations and no agency tried to dominate my section. In fact, I have never seen an agency or an agency representative trying to lobby in the committee to accomplish something. We did some, I'm not too proud to say, domination of some of the agencies. The International Convention might, if it wanted to, dominate an agency. An agency, by the very nature of the convention, could not dominate the convention. This is just sheer nonsense.

But there is another much more important issue here. That is the right to control. An agency is created to do a job. It is created to control that function for which it is created. It would be ridiculous to suggest that it go to some other group and ask that group to exercise control. If it did that, it would be dissolved at the next convention for not doing its job.

What I am saying is this: an agency has only the control that its influence as an effective agency in the program of the church entitles it to have. Let it stop doing its job, and it will lose its influence and thus lose what control it is entitled to have over its individual function.

But let us go on to something that means a great deal more to us all. The first two things I have mentioned which become important issues in the local church are not as important as this one. (Except, that anything that causes us to sit divided at the Table of Holy Communion is the most important sin in Satan's arsenal, and nothing ought to be important enough to cause us to come divided to His Table.) I want us to think now of:

### III. OUR RESPONSE TO THE DEMAND OF THE SCRIPTURES

Our response to the scriptures is basic .They either are or are not the standard by which we act. Let us assume that they are. This still is a point of division for we are now disagreed on what they say. The Southern Baptist and Pentecostal groups both are strong on the inspiration and authority of the scriptures, but none of our churches teach some of the things that they hold to be the essential elements of salvation. There is no question about the New Testament teaching Faith Healing and I have never heard a satisfactory dispute of the New Testament manifestation of "tongues" as the only valid standard by which to judge whether or not one has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, whatever that meant in New Testament times. We do not question at all whether or not the person coming to us by transfer of membership was baptised for the right reason or to accomplish the right purpose. We seem to believe that he can be baptized to symbolize the conquering of the god of the sea or to gain admittance into a group that denys the open communion table of Christ, just as long as he got wet all over in the process of becoming a member in some visible, local congregation. If we are not going to be any more selective than that, it certainly is not important enough to be made a point of division in the local church. I think baptism should be by immersion, but I am convinced that it is much more than that.

The real point I want to make is: those who deny that the scriptures

have any real authority are in the vast minority. The real question is: "What do they say that is authoritative?" Just what are the essentials? and further, do we have a right to deny Fellowship to one who disagrees on that point while we are trying to resolve it?

This is a vital issue in the local church and it tears the church to bits because it puts a fundamental disagreement between two brothers as a point of separation actually disolving the Brotherhood while they attend the Communion Table side by side in a futile effort to convince God that they consider one another as brothers.

Nobody can say to everybody's satisfaction that Jesus ever issued any command to be obeyed by everybody in the same way except the only command which everybody can obey in the same way: "Love one another as I have loved you." And that means dying for them and those whom He loved enough to die for has some pretty wild ideas about religion; all the way from calling down fire from heaven on to laying down their lives for their enemies.

When confronted with the Holy Scriptures, every man is shocked into some kind of peculiar behaviour; and every man becomes an expert in the scriptures the day after he enters the church. It is impossible, you see, to force a man to deny his personal experience and each man's experience with God is accompanied by an experience in which the scriptures have a new meaning to him. He understands some of the stories he never understood before but he doesn't realize that his understanding is limited to what has happened in his life alone. That is why, every time someone asked in the book of Acts: "What must I do to be saved?" he got a different answer; because he had a different need. Every one of those answers was an essential to that man's salvation. Now to separate the particularistic essentials from the general essentials is the problem to which no one has or will, I fear, ever have the answer. I say this because I do not believe that God will stand for it. **I believe that Fellowship and Unity of Faith in the person of Jesus Christ in spite of our differences in what we believe to be essential is one of the essentials of our salvation.** I do not believe we can be saved while we deny Fellowship of others who claim Him as Saviour and Lord.

Jesus prayed for Unity. I cannot believe that God would not grant that prayer. I do not see how it can be brought about in any other way than for us to join together in trying to work our way to the truth while we have Fellowship together as His children.

To be consistent at the local level in weeding out heretics and infidels, the local church would be forced to have an active board of inquisitors who would be forced to maintain two rolls: one for communicant and one for non-communicant members. If one is denied the Fellowship he must be ex-communicated, to remain consistent.

The scriptures make the strongest demand of all: they challenge every man at the point of his narrowness, littleness, shallowness and bigotry out into the area where he can commune with God and with other m e n as brothers even though they may be prodigal sons.

Then there is the Macedonian Call:

## IV. THE DEMAMND OF THE WORLD WIDE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

We must do something about this and what we do about it must not divide the local church members at the Table of Christ.

The Macedonian Call comes to us as a group and we must solve a problem: do we go or do we send someone? if we send someone, who? and

when he goes, under whose command is he, Christ's or ours?

Right here is where the problem of Cooperative and Independent beds down. If the local church has a right to local autonomy then the foreign mission church has the same right. Do we have a right to cut off their financial support if they begin to disagree with us over the expediency of some missionary practice? Should we give money that right? the right to buy and control the mind's and hearts of men?

If we force them to act under our instruction, they are spiritually as well as physically arrested at the level of our spiritual development. If we do not, we believe we would be supporting heresy. This is our problem and we are afraid of compromise.

Right here I want to say something about Love:

One does not have a right to do what he has a right to do, when he is in love. Paul said, (I. Cor. 13) that Love does not insist on its rights. And the church does not have a right to do what it has a right to do if it really loves the people of the world. Even if we have a right to divide over our differences we have no right to exercise that right. Even though we have a right to excommunicate the one who disagress with us we have no right to exercise that right. Love knows only its responsibilities and love's basic responsibility is Unity, Fellowship, and Brotherhood.

And let us not deceive ourselves with this idea of democracy; the church is not a democracy and we know it. Not one who would admit that the church has a right to vote by majority whether or not to drop the good confession, or baptize by sprinkling. This would be Vox Populi Vox Dei, the voice of the people would be the voice of God. We would not, I dare say, by majority vote decide anything here in this assembly.

The church is a kind of Theocratic Republic in which men are set aside to perform certain tasks. We even quote New Testament on that. And we ought to further admit the truth that once the Elders and Deacons have been set aside, that they have certain tasks to perform which the majority cannot deny them. Furthermore, the individual member ought to be advised of the truth on how to handle his tithe. When he has brought it into the storehouse of God, he has fully discharged his obligation. It now becomes the obligation of those to whom he has delegated that responsibility. I am no longer responsible for my money once it has been put into the plate. My board of Elders and Deacons will answer to God for where and how they spend it. And the New Testament sets up only one standard by which I can judge them and remove them: not what they do with the money or which agency they support, but their Christian Character before the Christian Community.

It is not necessary for the local church members to know or be concerned with how every cent of his missionary dollar is spent. He couldn't decide it if he knew, he wouldn't be qualified. At a meeting a few years ago, I was on a national board which heard testimony of the need behind the Iron Curtain for a program that would keep the name of Jesus alive. Not one member of my local church heard this testimony nor would they have been allowed to, probably, because of the secret nature of the work that was being done there. We authorized money to be spent to support this work which was to be carried on by Greek Orthodox priests. Now I don't know what kind of baptism Greek Orthodox priests practice, and I presume that they were going to spread the word about Christ in a sort of "open membership" whispering campaign but somebody had to underwrite the program. We voted to help. The members of my local congrega-

tion had no obligation to decide this and no responsibility in the matter at all.

It all boils down to this, I think, does the individual church member have a right to refuse to allow the church to pay the salary of the preacher just because he disagrees over some point? Does anybody honestly believe that there is a single church in the world in which every member is satisfied? If so, something is wrong. The Jews had a rule in the Sanhedrin that if the body voted solid, not one dissenting vote, that something was seriously amiss. They reasoned that seventy intelligent, well educated men couldn't agree on anything. I realize that this presentation is oversimplified, but I am trying only to make the point clear: that the local church is no place to promote division. Division belongs in the council halls.

I doubt that there is a single independent or cooperative congregation in the world. I think there are ministers who are independent or cooperative. If we are honest we know that when appeals go across our desks we put the ones we do not want to support in the waste basket and the ones we want to support in the hands of the proper persons to see that they get supported. If we should decide to have Fellowship at the clerical level, we should soon have Fellowship at the lay level. The talkers rule the world and we are the talkers. And we ought to be talking Fellowship, and Brotherhood, instead of division.

**CONCLUSION:**

This problem would not be so acute if all our members were in large metropolitan areas; they could just go to some other church. But in the area where there is only one church, or where the church is weak, as it is in large areas on the east and west coasts, we cannot afford division. For if the Trumpet give an uncertain sound, who will respond to do battle with the enemies of God?

Let me say again: I believe that the prayer of Jesus will be answered. But not until we realize that God does not, indeed could not use millions of little carbon copies of Jesus running around over the world looking, acting, talking alike. God wants millions of originals, each with the power that motivated Jesus motivating them.

Jesus is unique in history. He is the only great religious leader who seemed to have no regard for His own teachings. He doesn't day: "remember what I said," He says: "Remember me." He did not say: "This is the way," but "I am the way." And He was concerned with this that his last prayer was saturated with it. "Oh God," he cried, "don't let them break up into jealous, selfish little groups each claiming that it of all groups is right; but we did. Before His words had died on the air, we had pulled our self-righteous robes about us and retired into our priestly corners to defend the "faith once delivered to the saints," as if it were some neat package, neatly tied with blue ribbon to be passed on to all who perform the proper rituals of initiation into the sacred group in the approved way. We began to argue, and we sought defences for our position, the argument became a quarrel and the quarrel became a division until we sit on opposite sides of the Communion Table of Christ, which symbolizes through its common cup and common loaf our unity, and deny that we can have a fellowship of hearts.

But unfortunately, for our proud position, Jesus showed us the solution. There was a man in Jerusalem named Matthew. Now Matthew was a Publican, a tax collector, a hated collaborator with the enemy of God's people. And there was a man in Jerusalem named Simon. Now Simon was a Zealot, a member of the Israeli underground. Simon had sworn an oath and sealed it with his blood that at the first opportunity he would take Matthew's life. But there was one in

Jerusalem named Jesus. Now Jesus was the Son of God. He believed that he could call Matthew and Simon and make them work together as a team on a small committee composed of only twelve men.

So Jesus called Matthew and He called Simon and he set them to work. And they worked together just fine.

What was it that kept Simon's knife out of Matthew's heart? The Authority of the Holy Scriptures? the process by which persons were added to the group from time to time? the methodology of the evangelistic effort as they went out two by two to pave the way for His coming? the agencies which might have been left behind or sent on ahead to perform specific, temporary tasks? the physical structure of the Brotherhood? we know better, don't we?

What kept Simon's knife out of Matthew's heart was that they each looked up and worshipped Jesus as Saviour and Lord and they could look out toward one another and see, not Publican and Zealot, but Disciples of Jesus whom each worshipped and served and which made them brothers.

If I have anything worth remembering to say it is this: May we learn to look up in Love and surrender to Jesus as Saviour and Lord, so we may look out in love and surrender to one another as brothers.

As Burns, the great Scottish poet put it, after enumerating all the things over which we quarrel:

"For a' that and a' that, It's comin yit for a' that——

That man to man, the warld o'er,

Shall brithers be, for a' that."

This was the prayer of Burns, and the prayer of Jesus; May God help me to make it mine.

## THE NATURE OF A UNITED BROTHERHOOD

### A. T. DeGroot

My long-time associate, President D. E. Walker of Milligan College, and I each have thirty minutes in which to unite the historic Restoration Movement that began in the nineteenth century. It may be that we shall have to be content with something less than complete success; but by the explicit command laid upon us by the prayer of our Lord every sensitive disciple must keep the goal of the unity of the church in his vision. Other church bodies may be able to defend their reason for existence as witnesses to neglected truths, such as the sovereignty of God, the reality of Pentecostal visitation, the priesthood of every believer; but by reason of our inheritance we must ever give primacy to that glittering goal, the effective unity of the body of Christ on earth. For this purpose our movement was born. To cease in our efforts and experiments in behalf of oneness would be to relinquish sonship in the family that gave us birth.

One lesson of history is that union within freedom is an evasive and slippery object to be grasped by human beings. Perhaps some species of octopus with single vision but multiple means of embrace could fix and fasten upon it, but for the days of our flesh we must count the cost of our sinful pride and our petty partisan aims. Nations desperately long for peace but at the same time thrash and flail and belabor even their friends as dark impulses command their mood. Leaders of union labor speak from the platform about improvement of skills and productivity, but in caucus settle for evening the scores for old battles lost. On so "enlightened" a scene as a university campus professors will produce passion, believe it or not, in behalf of traditional or progressive methods in education. In every walk of life we exhibit our far less than

perfect apprehension of the unity of purpose and of work that could make a paradise of this earth.

One price of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is an acknowledgment that the Christian ministry is as human and as beset by sin in its holy work as are any of its fellows in so-called secular vocations. This does not mean that we have the right to be content with our weakness, for the nature of our calling brings us into partnership with the Divine; but it does mean for the sons of the Restoration movement that our search for unity must be pursued even while knowing that on earth we will usually fall short of a perfect demonstration of it.

It is important to recall that **we never were a completely united brotherhood** which only subsequently lost its pristine oneness. To speak of "restoring the Restoration" is to allure with fiction but with little more. The unity of our fathers was in their quest, not in the specific programs under which they found their several groupings. With nothing less than a testy spirit Alexander Campbell took dead aim on Walter Scott in 1838 and wrote "I am thankful that I never put the title 'Christianity Restored' nor 'Gospel Restored' to any thing I ever wrote." Yet they remained one in fellowship within the search for the divine intention for their lives. The oldest tributary of our movement is in North Carolina. It has given us a unique regulation of our white ministry, and nearly one-half of all of our American Negro members, but it represents cherished inheritances that vary significantly from general brotherhood practices. In the conclusion of his careful study of baptism in relation to open membership Dr. Joe Belcastro says,

"The Disciples must know that they have never been united in their understanding of New Testament baptism. In their beginning there were at least five baptismal positions with at least four attitudes toward the unimmersed and church membership. In the course of history there have appeared at least three types of closed membership churches with about eight types of open membership churches. There is a greater theological difference between some of the closed membership churches than between some open and closed membership churches. Some of the differences contain highly controversial - explosive elements. Yet every position had been advocated by sincere and honest followers of Jesus Christ, believing that the New Testament, either in word or spirit, supported them. Loyal men have been on all sides. It is not loyalty to the New Testament, but the contradictory understanding as to what the New Testament taught that has plagued the brotherhood with many controversies." (1)

In all of the history of Christianity the ordinance that has been the touchstone for unity or division is the Lord's Supper; yet, in this central act of outward and visible organizational fellowship our entire Restoration movement, including the present-day anti-organ Churches of Christ, have moved 180 degrees from strictly closed communion to a clearly open table. Consider two dicta of Alexander Campbell, one in 1826 and the other in 1850. Barton W. Stone had asked Mr. Campbell whether the unimmersed should be given even occasional access to the Table. The Bethany leader replied,

I know of no scriptural authority for such a discrimination. It is arbitrary and unreasonable. If I can admit an unimmersed person once-a-month for a year to all social ordinances, I can for life or good behavior. When I say, I can do so, I mean that all precepts, precedents and scriptural reasons, authorize such a course.

But in 1850 it was the same man who wrote,

(See footnotes on page 127, 128)

"This kissing of the cheek, this extending of the right hand of Christian fellowship, this complimentary compellation of our "orthodox fellow-christians of different communions," while not a crumb of consecrated bread, nor one drop of consecrated wine, will be extended to us any more than to Turks, Jews, or Infidels, is the quintessence of sublimated hypocrasy; the very spirit of guile and dissimulation from which every pure, and generous, and sensitive heart recoils in mortification and disgust."

It is one of the strangest experiences of doctrinal metamorphosis that any communion should undergo such a change and do so without significant controversy. It represents what must be nothing less deep than subconscious argumentation from a fixed hope for widest fellowship that permitted this transformation to come about with regard to so central a doctrine and so obvious a public practice. The significance of open communion in the whole of the Restoration movement today is a matter that we have never evaluated adequately, and gives us our highest hope for equal moves toward fellowship in other departments of Christian life with other communions.

This series of counsultations between cooperative and independent Christian Churches is being held because of another major problem of thought and practice. Basically, the question is, **Should Christianity seek to have a visible organization, or or ganizations, or form of any kind?** I shall try to give one man's answer with a clear proposal of what that organization may be.

Readers of Ralph Waldo Nelson's book, **The Experimental Logic of Jesus,** may believe with him that Rome subverted the Christian faith by insisting upon casting the church into the same mold as the empire; and that medieval and reformation Christianity remained hypnotized by this same insistence upon empire or national church organizations, combinations of church and state. History shows that there were occasional dissenters from these powerful movements, the Anabaptists being only one group of examples, but always their fate was like that of the soldier to whom Tweedledee referred in **Alice In Wonderland,** when he said, "One of the worst things that can happen to you in a battle is to have your head cut off." Congregationalism as a form of church government had to go into hibernation from Nicea in 325 until the birth of the glorious American ideal of a free church in a free state, that wonderful outcome of our Revolution.

Under the privilege of this religious liberty we are in consultation to decide whether the totality of churches needs any organization; that is, are we under orders as Christians to be as effective as possible through organization for fulfilling the command of the Great Commission? When we are told that we will be judged by our fruits there is not only a personal but also a corporate responsibility involved.

The fathers of our restoration movement were not unanimous in responding to this question, but a very great majority of them were in agreement about it, including all of the "Big Four," the two Campbells, Scott, and Stone. Alexander Campbell said:

"Christians must regard the church, or body of Christ, as one community, though composed of many small communities, each of which is an organized member of this great national organization; which, under Christ, as the supreme and sole Head, King, Lord, and Lawgiver, has the conquest of the whole world in its prayers, aims, plans, and efforts. Hence there must be such an understanding and agreement between these particular congregations as will suffice to a recognition and approval of their several

acts; so that the members or the measures of one community shall may happen to be presented." (**Christian System,** 3rd ed., p. 76)

In 1840 Campbell pled specifically for an almost presbyterian type of intercongregational government (see **Millennial Harbinger**), p. 130). An episode in the same year called forth his mature thought on this theme. The church in Baltimore expelled four members, who wrote to him about the right to appeal. He replied,

"When any particular congregation offends against the constitution of Messiah's kingdom by denying the doctrice, by neglecting the discipline, or by mal-administration of the affairs of Christ's church . . then said church is to be judged by the eldership of other churches, or by some other tribunal than her own, as an accused or delinquent member of a particular congregation is to be tried by the constituted eldership of his own congregation."

He proposed that the case should be referred to "two or three neighboring churches," and added, "No community called a church is absolutely independent of **the** church of God, but **is** amenable to the whole church for the administration of its affairs." (**Millennial Harbinger,** 1840, p. 513; cf. 1841, p 41 and 1842, p 63.)

In 1850 he sharpened his focus on this topic:

"The independence of any community in Christ's kingdom is not an independence of every other community in that kingdom, in whatever concerns the interests of that kingdom. This would, indeed, be a fatal error to the progress and prosperity of that kingdom. In what concerns every private community, it is, indeed, independent of, and irresponsible to any other; but it is both dependent on and responsible to every other community, in all that pertains to the interest, honor, and prosperity of all" (M H., 1850, p. 286).

At a deeper level of serious theological concern, Campbell confronted the tendency of some irresponsible congregationalists to evade the larger, social, and world-embracing duties of the kingdom of Christ by conjuring up a doctrine (as in Lutheranism) of the invisible church. Instead, he presented an ideal in which the church was meant to have a definite, visible, and united organization on earth. The church is related to and responsible for the welfare of society, just as in the New Testament individual salvation is related to a corporate group, with its visible practices of baptism, the Lord's Supper, and discipline. He affirmed,

"There is but one real Kingdom of Christ in the world, and that is equivalent to affirming that there is but one Church of Christ in the world. As to an invisible church in a visible world, schoolmen may debate about it till doom's day, but we know nothing of an invisible church in our portion of creation . . . It is, then, a fixed fact in Christianity that Jesus Christ has but one church, or kingdom in this world, and that this church is composed of all the communities properly called the Church of Christ." (M. H., 1853, pp. 106-107).

Barton W. Stone brought into the movement a conception of the ministry which was well in advance of simple congregationalism and local Autonomy. But the liberty-loving pioneers among whom he and Campbell moved on the American frontier would not accept anything resembling the bonds against which they had revolted in both political and ecclesiastical life, and insisted upon a rugged individualism in local church life and organization.

Starting with the strident objections of Jacob Creath, Jr., to the organization of a national missionary agency

in 1849, a body of opinion against societies was crystallized into a movement which resulted, by 1906, in the separate existence of the anti-organ, anti-society, and anti-pastor Churches of Christ. The majority of the churches, however, continued their search for an embodiment, and organization, of the responsible type of polity that Campbell and Stone had favored. Z. T. Sweeney, pastor of Tabernacle Church, Columbus, Indiana, wrote the constitution of the present International Convention of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ), in 1917. From then until now both cooperative and independent leaders have agreed that societies or agencies are proper tools for doing common Christian work. The key to the International Convention system is this statement about it written by Frederick D. Kershner.

"The individuals who constitute our societies appeal constantly for funds to our churches as churches. Now, if churches pay the bills, why have not churches the right to cooperate in order to review and pass upon the agencies to which they contribute, and which expend their money?"

Within the structure of this bi-cameral convention (one house the Committee on Recommendations, the other the mass meeting) significant development has taken place. The desire to get away from a multitude of competing missionary and other societies led, in 1920, to the creation of the United Christian Missionary Society, formed from six major agencies. In 1923, a Commission on Budgets and Promotional Relationships was established consisting of laymen and ministers, to encourage the agencies to practice the virtues of cooperation, fairness, business sense, and efficient service. By 1934, this led to the creation of Unified Promotion, designed "as far as possible" to give a "unified plan of promotion . . . to every righteous cause" in "a proper approach to all our local churches." Its growth is seen from its beginning in 1935 with 7 national boards, 23 state societies, and 5 colleges to a cooperation in 1962 of 8 national boards, 39 state societies, and 22 educational institutions. A Council of Agencies was established in 1950 to provide an inclusive inter-agency fellowship involving the whole of cooperative life.

How truly the group thought of the Disciples, with regard to their duty in the organization and administration of their inter-congregational life and work, has moved in the direction of responsibility may be seen in the changes that have taken place in the use of State convention types as of 1957 and then as of 1962:

| | '57 | '62 |
|---|---|---|
| Delegate conventions | 7 | 14 |
| Committee on Recommendations | 11 | 12 |
| Mass meeting, with protective clauses | 7 | 6 |
| Mass meeting only | 13 | 7 |

We should also be reminded that in Great Britain our Disciples church polity has gone far beyond the forms of consultation and delegated authority seen in America. The result there is a type of organization that is nothing less than the strongest type of presbyterianism, with uniform salaries for all ministers, assignment of these ministers to their parishes by a central committee, etc. And all of this has been done with full belief that the churches are following the admonitions of the New Testament.

In the light of this long development of our thought and action as a brotherhood, creating a number of agencies, and ordering their structure and work through a consultative fellowship known as the International Convention, we come now to the crux of our problem. The question is, Does this mean that no persons or congregations have the moral right to act in these fields without using these particular agencies? A good reply is given by Willard M. Wickizer.

". . . The United Christian Missionary Society is "fraternal" rather than "ecclesiastical" in its organizational base . . . It would be a mistake to endeavor to make the United Society the "Official" national missionary and educational agency of the brotherhood. We should oppose as unwise and untrue to fact any effort to convince an individual or congregation in the brotherhood that they must of necessity cooperate with and support the Society or else leave the brotherhood. Of course, I personally believe in the United Christian Missionary Society and I propose to do my missionary and educational work through it; and I would like to see every other individual in the brotherhood work with and through it, but I am not prepared to say that those who do not see it my way should not be considered Disciples of Christ." (From paper read before the Biennial Meeting of the Home and State Missions Planning Council, St. Louis, December 1948.)

This means that if an individual or a church believes that the particular agency created by the general action of the churches and approved by the International Convention is not, in his or its opinion, at that time doing its duty, these have the right to make their offerings to any other agency of their choice, such as the American Bible Society, Church World Service, the Church Peace Mission, or any other of the hundreds of such societies as exist. It means that if some feel that our mission includes an evangelistic message to Christians (Lutherans, Eastern Orthodox, etc.), they may express this through the European Evangelistic Society, which also reports to the International Convention. It means that if some persons or churches feel that new witnessing work should be opened up in countries presently unreached by the United Society (e. g., in Brazil), it is their privilege to band together to do this. However, since the judgment of the main body has been that new work would be opened only as existing missions are adequately financed, both parties (the United Society, and the new independent group) should operate as friends, even while disagreeing as to the wisdom of the new expansion. It certainly means that neither side should call names, such as 'apostate' or 'dis-loyal' to those in disagreement. These are the necessary demands of democracy, and any departure from them represents a disservice to the total cause. Within a democracy any minority is obliged to prove the wisdom of its independent action by successful service over a period of years, always doing so with full reports to the whole body even when it does not have the contemporary consent and approval of that body. The aim of such minority action should be to win the approval of the larger body by meritorious and harmonious action.

A democratic brotherhood thinks slowly and moves cautiously, but it is more apt to find the truth about polity and faith than is the case with oligarchies and monarchies in religion. (2) The long story of our adoption of loose cooperations, district and state and then national societies, the relating of these to each other in behalf of the welfare of the total cause, shows that the Christian Churches (Disciples) have pondered seriously and experimented hopefully in a search for biblically authorized ways of common life and work. Their career clearly shows a trend of movement among originally independent churches toward awareness of their common responsibility.

There is a distinct theological connotation, even an affirmation, of the nature of the church, in the partly unconscious adoption of certain terms by the major working agencies of the Christian Churches (Disciples). These include the **United** Christian Missionary Society, and **Unified** Promotion. The Lordship of Christ in the work

of the church implies a responsibility to elicit a **wholeness of response** from all persons and churches in their living witness to faith. There is equally a demand for some device for ascertaining the **mind** that exists in the total church and the education of that mind into continued and new expressions. This is what the International Convention does. There is a basic theology which produces a principle and an agency of cooperation in religion—a strong belief about God-given freedom within fellowship, because **positive declaration of fellowship is basic to the Biblical understanding of the church.**

The older, uncritical or unthought assumption in International Convention fellowship was that the agencies in it were there on the dog-eat-dog basis of each one for himself, promotionally, regardless of the fortunes of the others. Across the years, a new understanding of the meaning of fellowship has arisen. There were days, not long ago, when a large home mission agency would not grant the use of its list of supporters for circulating the materials of other agencies. This is no longer the case. All agencies now in the International Convention (with one exception—and that one has been largely "independent" from its beginning) understand that they aid each other; that an attack upon one is an attack on the others. This does not mean that attack cannot be permitted or never would be justified, but it does mean that such attack is to be an open thing within the whole group, and is not to be a covert or single attack apart from the wisdom of the whole community. The several agencies see themselves as parts of a larger whole, with inescapable mutual responsibilities.

This means the end of the era when some agencies took membership as "reporting" agencies within the International Convention with the expectation of reporting—only; they did not mean to subject themselves to the group thinking and group disciplines. Any such agency clearly was only **using** the International Convention as a means of reaching a large constituency for its own support with no sense of having a responsibility for the welfare of the whole brotherhood and all its agencies. When this became clear, the Brazil Christian Mission withdrew, in 1961, rather than to be associated with agencies that it did not want to help. There is one agency still within the Convention which from its beginning has refused to be anything other than a free-wheeling society, making its own requests for money but having no significant participation in the larger task of mutual aid.

As I see it, the choices before us are fairly clear. We are discussing the question as to whether our churches need to have any visible organization apart from an utterly independent local congregation. We could choose (1) episcopacy in church government with its priestly assumption parallel to the divine right of kings. We could choose (2) an oligarchical church superintendency derived from Reformation state churches. We could choose (3) a representative congregationalism which expresses awareness of the wholeness of the church being made up of local congregations in responsible, democratic cooperation, much after the pattern of our great American political government. Or we could choose (4) complete anarchy as our theory of any relationships beyond the local independent congregations. I do not know what other choices there are.

I am sure that many members of this Consultation will correct me if I am wrong, so I make so bold as to say that it seems to me that tentatively the Independent fellowship has chosen Type No. 4 above. But I think the honest student can understand why this present choice

has been made. One reason is that conservatives do not want to be in fellowship with liberals. One speaker at the Stillwater Consultation (1961) said "I am an ultra-conservative biblicist." He added, "we must have a uniform attitude toward the Bible for unity." This is a sure receipe for endless schisms, but not a way to unity. The editorial in **Christianity Today,** November 24, 1961, also demanded doctrinal uniformity, but its view of the Bible would have shut out our Independent speaker at Stillwater. Apart from this theological reason for our present-day separation there is a more practical one, which affects our jobs as ministers and as missionaries — and as professors in Bible colleges, and as presidents thereof. Am I right in sensing that our most difficult problem is. Can we have a united brotherhood in which there are whole local churches honestly committed to a Unified Promotion, but also whole local churches equally committed to supporting the faith-sent missionary who may or may not make any reports of his work? And, even more problematical, Can we expect to succeed with some cases of local churches in which a "United Society" group exists and lives in genuine peace with an "Independent Missions" group?

I believe we can have such a United Brotherhood. We can do so, however, only by understanding clearly in what our unity consists. It is not to be determined by missionary methods. It must be a unity determined by a common committment to the Lordship of Christ as only Savior. Under such a commitment we have room for a variety of methods in Christian work. It is important, however, that we do something positive about declaring our unity within a "like precious faith." Let me be so bold as to sketch a possible step toward a greater unity.

What I propose is not really new, but simply the application of what many of our European brethren have found to be joyfully helpful in growing together. There several national, inter-national, and inter-denominational groups have (in Germany, for example) a **Kirchentag** (Church day). It is far more than a day; it is a couple of weeks with varied programs for study, inspiration and witness. The heart, the power-house of it is its witness in behalf of unity. In Germany the vastly predominant church is the **Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland** (Evangelical Church in Germany), called the E.K.I.D. Even its founders and present-day administrators cannot agree on whether it is one church, or one federation of churches, or just what it is. They are fully agreed, however, that it has become a precious fellowship for all of them, and a real experience of growth toward unity, particularly at the point of the Kirchentag and its public witness of a felt unity.

What could be happier for all spiritual descendents of the historic American and inter-national Restoration movement than to participate in a day of public witness to their common faith? Our leaders in all portions of the larger family certainly have the ability to make this possible. All we need is the will. I submit that in this day when group life and group power is more and more a reality, we have an increasing duty to pay heed to our Lord's prayer, which is his command, for the fullest possible unity of his people. As only one step toward this end, we could plan to have the national conventions of our existing major groups meet occasionally in the same or nearby cities at the same time. For the present let us acknowledge that in theology, which is human thought, we have not arrived at agreement. (3) Let us agree that for an undetermined period we shall disagree about methods of work. But on a Sunday common to the coordinate conventions would come the "Church Day," for which some good term

APPENDIX. From Joseph Belcastro, **The Disciples of Christ and Baptism.** Unpublished manuscript, p. 253. The Different Types of Baptismal Churches

| | CLOSED MEMBERSHIP CHURCHES | | | OPEN MEMBERSHIP CHURCHES | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Immersion | Immersion for forgiveness of sins. | Immersion for forgiveness of sins, but accept any immersed person. | Any rite, but immerse only. | Any mode, but immerse only. | Faith only, but immerse only. | Faith only, but any mode available. | Worship-work, but immerse only. | Two or more types of membership, but immerse only. | When unimmersed accepted without knowledge of church, a problem develops when it learns of this years later. | Unimmersed accepted into local churches on basis of ecumenical membership, but immerse only. |
| J. M. Philputt, Philputt-Willett's That They May All Be One. | | | | | | | | | X | | |
| E. S. Ames, Whither Disciples. | | | | | | X | | | | | |
| C. C. Morrison, The Meaning of Baptism. | | | | X | | | | | | | |
| Barton W. Stone, Christian Messenger, November, 1831 | | | | | X | | | | | | |
| Alexander Campbell, Christian Baptism, pp. 203-205 (1851) | | | | | | X | | | | | |
| Joe Belcastro, The Scroll Winter, 1956. | | | | | | X | | | | | |
| J. B. Cowden, Worshiping Toward Christian Unity. | | | | | | | | X | | | |
| Some Ministers-Churches, Henry K. Shaw's obsbervations. | | | | | | | | | | X | |
| W. T. Moore, The Fundamental Error of Christendom. | | | | | | X | | | | | |
| L. L. Pinkerton, Christian Standard, June 30, 1873. | | | | | | X | | | | | |
| Dr. John Thomas, Richardson, R., Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, Volume II, pp. 444, 445. | | X | | | | | | | | | |
| Walter Scott, The Gospel Restored. | | | X | | | | | | | | |
| Isaac Errett, Christian Standard, October 17, 1885. | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| D. S. Burnet, N. L. Keith's, The Story of D. S. Burnet. | | | | | | | X | | | | |
| Myron C. Cole, Christian Standard, July 1, 1961. | | | | | | | | | X | | X |

should be chosen. It might be—

United Church Day
Primitive Church Day
New Testament Church Day
Restoration Rally Day

Some wits might even want to wear tags reading "I'm more primitive than you are," or "Silence is golden but women don't know it," or other affirmations of being back-to-the-Book.

The central magnet which for a few years might be our only common act (for unity is a thing that must grow) should be a whole participation in the observance of the Feast of Remembrance, with Christ our Lord as the inviting host. Already our people have the greatest annual Protestant Eucharistic Congress, in the Lord's Supper at our various conventions. Christ is the source and the cause of our unity; why not say so, unitedly? I am persuaded that if we will do only this for a few seasons, other kinds of unity will come as unstructured gifts. I believe that our Churches of Christ brethren, as individuals if not as church units, will be happy to share in that part of our life as Christians about which, historically, we have never been divided, that is, that it is the privilege of the church to spread the Lord's Table, and the duty of the individual Christian to examine himself, and so partake. If we examine oruselves honestly in this day of increasing power in mass witnessing and mass movements, how can we do any less than to exhibit our given unity? Methods in missions and schools of thought in theology must wait for the mind of the persons to render judgment upon them, but judgment will be upon us if we fail to witness the unity that our Lord has given to us. Together we should reverently praise the one Name that is above every Name. His blessing and His design for unity will in time be His gift to His people.

## TOWARD DISCERNIBLE UNITY IN CHRIST

**Dean E. Walker**

I speak with you tonight from a heart burdened with the gravity of our present concern. I am saddened by the thought that these conversations may be too late. I am discouraged to note that there appears to be a note of finality and ultimacy attached by certain participants to the courses of action to which they have committed themselves. I am chagrined to see what little discrimination is made between the faith which may legitimately be final and ultimate, and the consequent applications of that faith to social conditions necessarily subject to present and variable programs and projects. I am somewhat startled to discover among us an assumption that human politics and divine sovereignty are compatible. I am disturbed by the very wording of the subject of our thought tonight, which I suggest indicates a somewhat indistinct comprehension of the term "Brotherhood," and in particular as this concept may be related to the Church.

I devoutly hope that you may permit me to confess before men my sin in originating, sustaining, or having partnership in, divisions in the Body of Christ. I suggest that these conversations might be more distinctly heard, were we all to join in this confession. Nor do I mean that we should have a litany of confession prepared which we might read in concert. I mean that we should join in such confession with strong crying and tears flowing from penitent hearts. It is my conviction that such a spirit will **alone** constitute an adequate amplifier for our message.

I know how hard this is. A sincere man may struggle so long and so hard to discover the logical outcome and practical application of his faith that, once having arrived at his conclusion, he can scarce avoid ascribing to it

the character of a revelation. A man of gentle spirit may so long for fellowship, that he seeks it on the easy road along which dwell those whose ideas and preferences are similar to his own; and having enjoyed the company of these folk, comes to regard them as the predestined brothers among whom alone he would live. I know how difficult it is for the man of action and political leadership to feel that in the security of his accomplishments he has discovered the blessing and approval of his God. I know how easy it is for the sensitive soul to be deeply wounded by acrimonious words and actions directed toward himself, and to avoid such hurt, to find refuge in an amiable society, the cardinal principle of which is to deny the existence of evil. And I know how desperately easy it is for **all** of these types whom I mention and others who might be mentioned, to draw a circle of exclusive righteousness with themselves in the center, and by implication or outright identification, to consign all without the circle, to the darkness of desolation and the condemnation of Divine Judgment.

So I repeat, if our conversations are to be heard, they must rest upon penitent confession, that we, each one of us, are soiled with the sin of sectarianism, of party-ism, of judgments against persons, of withholding redeeming fellowship from those whose genetic relationship would require that we extend to them our love as brethren. And if by some chance that brother-craving fellowship may be caught in the grip of this or that sin, to extend to him such fellowship as may be permitted by our conscience. And most certainly, a fellowship with such an one, dissociated from his sin, is redeeming fellowship.

Now I suggest that we endeavor to surmount all these obstacles in our thinking, and use the term "Brotherhood" in a completely non-denominational sense, as a term within these conversations analagous to the term "Church." There is value in such an approach, for the term "Brotherhood" has lost much in its current usage. Actually, it appears to carry a connotation for most of us similar in content to that employed by theologians and sociologists in their use of the term "denomination." Repudiation of the validity of this concept of Christianity lies at the center of our heritage. We were a people discontent in the presence of dis-unity among the Disciples of Christ. Our uneasiness in the company of complacent sectarianism gave rise to our repudiation of the social criteria by which such dis-unity is acknowledged and perpetuated. It was for this reason that our fathers de-frocked ecclesiastics, and refused to be governed by corporate regulations claiming to embody the judgment of the Church. Our heritage views unity as something infinitely more spiritual, and definitely of a higher moral order, than is possible of attainment or expression in human organization.

Unity in the New Testament concept is personal, man with Christ, and man with man. The vertical dimensions of this relationship is expressed initially in personal faith and responsible baptism. One declares his relationship to Christ in an affirmative judgment that "Jesus is the Son of God." In this faith one commits himself to the Lordship of Christ in accepting the gift of baptism. By these two basic acts, one fixes his attitudes toward God through Christ, and receives his status in the family of God **through** Christ. This attitude and status together, enable the Christian to acquire and develop the further riches of God's grace. Thought and sentiments, emotions and imagination, virtues and activities, are transformed from a status of a desirable personal and social character, to that in which they are reflections of the truly human and divinely partnered life, freed from earth's imprisonment to

exhibit before the universe the indwelling of God in His people. This is not to deny the genius of the human life in attaining great heights of knowledge, of insight, of righteousness, and creative ability. It **is** to affirm however, that in this personal unity between man and Christ, all these human achievements are transfused with the stuff of Eternity. God adds to human life a further gift of personality which does not die.

I know that these are truths both self-evident and foot-noted in every Christian century by the saints, and by the doctors, and by the laity of the Church, yet I respectfully urge that in our present status, out of which these conversations issue, we have paid scant attention to this basic and wholly revolutionary concept and experience, granted to us in the revelation of God in Christ, His Son. Has the time not come when we would restudy the issues involved in these basic considerations? Dare we be complacent in giving lip-acceptance to this common mind of the Church, yet permit ourselves to be divided over lesser issues?

A corrollary to this basic concept of unity in the New Testament is of course that all persons so united are thereby related to all other persons so united. I venture the judgment that the New Testament finds the root of this Christian fellowship in the experience of familial love. The gospel and epistles known as those of John, set forth this theme in both mystical and practical terms. Paul's description of the Church as the 'Body of Christ' drives home the same point. The Highpriestly prayer of our Lord is concerned with this same objective. I suppose we might summarize the meaning of this Christian fellowship by saying that it consists of mutual concern and communion.

Now of course in a family one may rarely see a perfect exhibition of mutual concern and communion. Christian love may perhaps best be understood as the exercise of intelligent and affectionate good will. But notice that the attainment of goodwill, as well as its exercise, is conditioned by the capacity of the person to think and to feel. Further, it is conditioned upon our ability to think and to feel in terms of the thoughts and emotions of our Heavenly Father. If by chance we look upon our fellow men with less understanding and with less affection than that with which God regards them, is it not proper to say that we have to that degree failed in our realization of the horizontal aspects of Christian Unity? To concern ourselves with fellow man as God concerns **Himself** with men THIS is the essence of the unity of men in Christ.

I know that again I am pleading for, speaking for a principle, for an ideal, for a goal not easily to be obtained. Yet, the search for an adequate expression of both vertical and horizontal unity, both in spite of and because of, the elusive nature of the end sought is both the justification for and the powerful attraction of the concept of a free association of Restoration of this continuous humble search for the high destiny of man to which God calls him — this is the charm of the Restoration Movement. And charming it is when divested of these channels of containment through which you and I seek to make of it a reservoir or to lead it to a desert of evaporation. Our unity as a Movement, as a Brotherhood, as a Church, depends upon this Movement through which we search in concert for an always enlarging perception of the grace of God in which to refine our multiple witness that our unity may be discernable through our multiple callings and activities.

This horizontal unity is much more difficult to attain, we think, than is the vertical unity. I suppose this comes about because of our basic

equality in Christ. We are willing to be subject to Him. We are not quite so certain that we should be subject to some other man. After all, might not even the wisest and greatest of Christian teachers be at times in error and what is to hinder that I, however insignificant in achievement, might be the instrument of God in detecting that particular error. And if the unlikely should happen and I should discern such error, do I not have an obligation to point a better way? Does not the witness of the centuries suggest that significant advancement in Christian understanding and practice may frequently arise from unexpected and humble sources? I take it that there are few among us in these conversations who would defend the infallability of either heirarchy or councils.

Yet, such is the perversity of human nature that after we organize ourselves to prosecute some immediate aspect of our progressive Movement we then identify that organization of ourselves as the movement itself, nay, even sometimes the Church itself. Then, in solemn convocation we issue regulations, define attitudes, and modes of thought and draw new circles of fellowship and find ourselves caught again in the sectarianism from which we had sought to escape.

I should call attention at this point to the fact that I am speaking not of any particular organization or association among ourselves. I am speaking of principles which may be illustrated in the practice of both radicals and liberals and conservatives of all types, descriptions, and character. I am speaking of that which happens to benevolent societies, missionary endeavors, educational ventures, congregations, conventions, the press, and all other of these activities into which we are initially led by the Spirit of God in order to cooperate effectively in the accomplishment of His will. Certainly it is not the cooperation in which we engage. Certainly it is not the nature of the project which we undertake. Certainly it is not the personnel involved in any of these enterprises—no, none of these are wrong in themselves, nor in the ideals they attempt to set forth. Imperfect they may be in their realization of their goals, some results of their work may occasionally be of small use and conceivably may be actually delinquent before Divine judgment. Such is the history of human life. But the great tragedy lies not in these issues but rather in the startling, stultifying, despairing failure experienced when these means become ends in themselves—when from our finite thoughts and judgments we seek to draw infinite and ultimate controls.

You see, when we restrict unity and fellowship to the areas of political and social organization and activities we are forced by the framework employed to exercise judgment with respect to our fellowmen. That judgment belongs to God. It is sinful for us to invade His prerogative. This is the tragedy of our disunion. We have judged one another. There is no way out but that of repentance.

Nevertheless, you will properly say 'extra ecclesia nullum salvum', we do not live in Christian fellowship save in the Church. One cannot be a Christian in isolation. Fellowship requires fellows. So the center of our problem becomes this simple question—Granted that our unity lies in our relationship to Christ in terms compatable with the New Testament and granted that our horizontal unity is centered in our mutual concern and communion that Christian love or the exercise of intelligent good will in Christ be made discernible to those who look our way—granted these things how can Christians meet the diversity of demands made upon them by the nature of our civilization, nay by the nature of society itself, and still pos-

sess and make discernible this unity with God in Christ of which Christianity consists. I suggest that we look at these considerations frankly seeking to learn each from the other.

First, we need to remember that the word Church, ecclesia—synagogue—is initially a secular term. It refers to an assembly officially called under a constitution. There can be no such thing as an assembly under conditions which prevent all its members from meeting. In terms of polity this means that the members of an assembly must be within commuting distance from its meeting point. To this concept we ordinarily give the term "congregational" to distinguish this polity from that which we distinguish as "espiscopal" or "presbyterial."

The disadvantages which are alleged to lie in the nature of this congregational polity are those which grow out of our human political experience and out of our human philosophical and theological speculations. Diverting our eyes from the essential nature of unity as personal, we seek political and theological controls in the interest of concerted action in this or that aspect or area of human life. Then, we define unity in terms of such control and such uniformity.

I sometimes wish my evaluation of human nature were such that I might have confidence in such systems of control. Certainly the operation of social reform would appear to be much easier when it may have divine sanction imparted to political activity. Yet, I cannot read the history of the Church without observing that the control of the Church in its activities, its form, its thought, its life, has been achieved by secular government and culture only through the ecclesiastical mechanisms originally designed to make our unity in Christ discernible.

Inefficiency and variability appear at first sight to characterize congregational polity and so make unity obscure. Yet I suggest that the very nature of the responsibility lodged in the congregation provides the Church with a strength not available to that which accrues to forms of polity in which responsibility is delegated. In the final analysis no one can delegate his Christian responsibility.

Moreover, the voice of history would indicate that political controls lose their force when confronted with the mobility and elusive character of congregational integrity. It is virtually impossible to persecute a Church possessed of no central offices, no bishops, no political controls and controllers, no bureaucracy to which people are responsible. I suggest that it is not unthinkable that the strength of communism in this day derives immediately from the image created in the minds of people by the hierarchies and synods through which the Church sought in the first instance to gain efficiency and a unified sense of direction. In talking with students educators, and people in many walks of life, both in Europe and America. I find but little opposition to Christian ideals, but small resistance to the proposition that nothing can account for Jesus except that God was in Him. But among these same people I do find resentment and anomisity toward the activities of those who claim to represent Christ and to organize and apply His teaching to the society of our time. These people simply do not see that the theological and ecclesiastical activities of the Church of our time adequately exhibits the will of God as reflected through Christ. Nor do they see either the vertical or the horizontal unity with God in Christ which the New Testament lays before us as an obtainable goal. It is a hard thing to attain and experience love of man under laws regulatory of such affection. Law is control. Grace is free. Love goes beyond law and thrives in grace.

So I would point out that the em-

ployment of the term Church to designate the essential focus of Christian fellowship arises not from imperial Rome but from the Greek state and from the Jewish synagogue. Had God intended the Church to be formulated along political principles the existence of the lex Romana and the example of the Senatus and the imperator were immediately before the eyes of those who wrote of Christ in the documents comprising our New Testament. That they centered their thoughts on ecclesia and synagogues can hardly be regarded as accidental.

In the second place allow me to suggguest that along with this essential concept of the Church set forth in the New Testament, there is also a discernible endorsement therein of the principle of concerted action or cooperation between Christians for the accomplishment of specific goals, not within the reach of the individual congregation comprising that essential concept.

I doubt that many responsible scholars today would insist that there is any one pattern of ecclesiastical organization in this wide sense to be found in the New Testament, but it is equally obvious that **many** examples and forms of widespread cooperation are recognized and endorsed within those writings.

It is hard to withhold the conclusion that in the view of the New Testament there is a distinction to be drawn between the **Church** and the **media** of Christian action. I think I need not in this company belabor this point.

Perhaps it might be profitable for us to review our current situation to see whether this distinction is recognized in the common mind of the Church. I think it is. For example, in the area of Christian education, both state churches and denominations do found and control institutions of learning designed to include Christian thought in the curricula of educational experience. But it is quite noticeable, also true, that colleges and universities are frequently organized in such a manner as to retain a Christian orientation while assuming a character of control independent of official ecclesiastical organization. This is done through the establishment of foundations, through which they are supported. It is done by charters issued by the State, reserving to themselves their autonomy. It is accomplished through some sort of de facto understanding, reached between the trustees of a college and the clientele it serves. In an examination of the practices of educational institutions related to the Christian Churches, I doubt if ecclesiastical control is embodied within the charter of any of them. This same principle is to be found operating in the establishment of many similar services in almost every field of Christian activity, in almost every state and free Church anywhere on earth. Benevolent societies, Christian homes, Missionary organizations, and similar institutions for the propagation of Christian ideals in nearly every field of human activity may be found resting upon the same social basis of organization. Such institutions may be found even within the general framework of Roman Catholicism. The independent Presbyterian missionary, Higginbotham, revered for his work in India, once served as the Moderator of the Presbyterian National Assembly in this country. The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge is an example in English Episcopalian fellowship. In our own immediate fellowship, all of our agencies rest upon a basis of a contract between a voluntary association of Christian men and the state in which the organization was formed.

Perhaps even more significant is the fact that the famous orders of the Dominicans, the Franciscans, and various of the preaching friars, arose without the framework of the hier-

archy of the Roman Church, even in the days of its most successful control of all Christian activity. This fact illustrates one great principle in the vitality of the Christian faith, that is, that the Spirit of God operates within the heart of persons, irrespective of the political or social framework within which that individual may be contained. When, therefore, a person is moved to discern a cause and devote himself to it, and produce good from that devotion, a new dimension of Christian advance is not infrequently the resultant, whether or not that person receives a prior endorsement by those in control of the ecclesiastical machinery to which he may belong.

In other words in our own heritage we design what we may see in the common heritage of the entire Church that is, that the Spirit of God cannot be contained within the framework of any human organization or any human system of thought. It is therefore to be expected, and with thanksgiving, that many agencies may be called for by many needs, many opportunities, many times.

It is essential that the Church have tools with which to work. It is necessary that Christians cooperate. It is necessary that agencies of cooperation be formed. But it is against the voice of reason and the experience of history, and the example of the New Testament that **any** of these agencies be given monopolistic privileges. It is likewise futile to **attempt** such exclusive fellowship. As long as sensitive souls listen for the guidance of God's Spirit, so long as they study to give more adequate expression to the love of God for men, just so long will they remain a part of that restless stream, that movement, that seeks new ways of service, more adequate incorporation of the will of Christ into every aspect of human life. Freedom may **seem** chaotic, but freedom is ALIVE!

A third aspect of this discernible unity in Christ is to be found in the identity of the Christian assembly. What are the distinguishing marks of an assembly of people seeking to qualify for the term Christian Church?

I recall attending a meeting of the Grange in rural Ohio one Saturday night. Whole families were present, they ate togther, a hymn was sung, prayers were offered, business conducted ,some games were played, conversation was general, they were dismissed. Sunday morning I met with them in Church. The same people were present, the same general activities took place, yet in this instance they met as a Church. What distinguished it at this meeting as a Church rather than a Grange? Two things. First, the night before they had met in confident faith in the principles of t h e i r agricultural organization. When they met as a Church, they met in confident faith that Jesus is the Christ, their Lord, in whom they reposed their redemption. The distinguishing feature in the presentation of this faith was in this instance a sermon directed toward faith in and subjection to our Divine Lord.

The second distinguishing feature about this meeting on Sunday morning was that in the name of Christ the sacraments of baptism and of the Lord's Supper were offered to those who presented themselves for the reception of these expressions of their faith: It happened that on that day that one man did declare his faith that 'Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God,' and his reception of baptism was arranged. At the close of the service the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was made available for those who chose to avail of this gift of God's grace. Most of those present, as far as I could observe, did avail themselves of this opportunity.

These two acts appear to be the distinguishing features differentiating the meeting of the Grange and the meeting of the Church.

I do not mean to suggest that the Christian teachings which they received on the Lord's Day were not taken seriously in the meeting on Saturday evening. I do not infer that their moral condition was better in one meeting or the other. I do not mean to infer that these two organizations and the activities associated with them were incompatible. I would hesitate to deny that there was a measure of influence exercised by each over the other. But I do mean that the distinguishing marks which made the meeting on Sunday morning—the CHURCH, are to be found in the faith and the sacraments deriving from and exhibiting Christ as Lord.

One further observation concerning the identity of the Church impressed me then as at innumerable times since. It consists in this attitude toward those who would receive the sacraments and avow their faith in Christ. Though his previous life and known character hardly commended him to the fellowship of the rest of the people, the man who expressed his faith in Christ was received at face value. No one sought to catechize him or interrogate the genuineness of his profession. He was a person seeking to acknowledge his relationship to another Person, that of Christ, toward his affiliation in the family of God. The people did not judge him. They received him. Nor was any disposition exhibited to express the judgment that his previous experience as the recipient of sprinkling in infancy should stand in the way of his reception of baptism as the portrayal of the death and resurrection of our Lord. Indeed, had he **asked** that on the ground of his sincerity he might **offer** this infantile experience in lieu of baptism, then the congregation would have been obliged to judge whether or not he was sincere. Such a judgment would involve a direct invasion of the prerogative of God who **alone** can know the sincerity of the human heart. It would matter little whether that judgment concerning this man's character were affirmative or negative. Christ forbids **judgment,** irrespective of its favorable or unfavorable character, when this judgment is applied to the character of people. In similar vein, no one questioned the right of any of those present to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the determination of this participation rested upon the responsibility of each communicant. No judgment was passed concerning the right of anyone so desiring to partake. Here again was illustrated that major point, that the nature of the unity of the Church is personal. No doubt there are unworthy people who seek to make themselves a part of a congregation of Christians. Equally, no doubt, no human device has been found to detect such insincerity.

The Church cannot decide whom God receives. The Church is commissioned to offer only that which God has commissioned it to offer to those who come seeking unity in Christ discernible to the world. The confession of faith, the reception of baptism, the eating of the supper, **these** constitute the identifying marks of the Church.

Now I think we may see a course which may lead us toward discernible unity in Christ, as we join humbly in a movement, searching always for a more adequate comprehension and practice of the will of Christ, and disengaging ourselves from every attempt at judgment or control over our fellows. These conversations are concerned with three primary problems. Is congregational polity adequate for the discernment of unity? I have told you why I think it is. Can we distinguish between the Church and its agencies, and therein discern unity? I have told you my reasons for thinking this possible. Can we identify the Church as distinguished from other social endeavors? I think we may readily do so.

These three immediate problems

may be resolved in the light of the personal character of both the vertical and horizontal unity characterizing the family of God.

**Tulsa Footnoe.**

It seems remarkable that Americans who so pride themselves on their political astuteness should be so naive and provincial in their theology of the Church.

Our predisposition to define Churchmanship, Christian brotherhood, and Christian cooperation, in terms of an ideaology of democracy interpreted in the light of American political experience discloses to the Christian world a periphery of insight and outlook bordered by the New England town meeting and the Virginia house of Burgesses. To use the term 'Kingdom of God' in concepts drawn from the Massachusetts ballot box and from the established Church of Virginia is to truncate ecclesiology in the interest of treating two of its less significant experimental deviations as though no Christian thought or life or historical experience with the Word of God had existed prior to the puritan revolution.

What we forget is the essential Judaic roots of the Church. The synagogue did not determine its faith nor its practices by popular vote. To the Jew the Kingdom of God represented a people sustaining a genetic relationship to God, not a political relationship in the Roman and Western sense. Western theology to a great extent and American theology to an amazing extent has dissevered itself from the history of Israel and the concept of the origin of law and from the idea of an imminent God who needs no political controls to enable people to realize His blessings through their obedience to His Law.

## SOCIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN BROTHERHOOD PROBLEMS

**Wayne Reinhardt**
**Parkville, Mo.**

Christian Churches find themselves in a situation rather like that of the monk, in the obscure Roman Catholic monastic order, who explained his order to a questioner as follows: "Well, the Dominicans are more scholarly, the Franciscans more effective in work with the poor, the Trappists more holy, and the Jesuits more disciplined; but when it comes to **humility, we're** tops!" We look out upon the Christian world, recognizing God's gifts to various of the denominations, yet deploring the divided state of Christ's Church; then we look at ourselves and rejoice that God has given to us the gospel of Christian **unity,** which we cherish so very deeply that we will **divide** ourselves to defend it!

This paper will deal with several factors which I believe to be crucial to our efforts toward Christian unity. These are, at first glance, "theological" factors; but I am convinced that a second look will help us to see that they are at least partly sociological and psychological factors. They are **pre**-theological or **sub**-theological, in that they function **not** just at the level of thought, but much more importantly at the level of assumption and feeling, of disposition and temperament, and are felt to be the basis on which theology is developed. They are the projection screen on which our thinking is projected, the mental furniture in which we sit while we think and talk about unity; and for this reason they are all the more critically important, because they tend to be taken for granted as part of the background of our discussion, which means that we seldom look at **them.** They **operate on** our rational discussion, but are themselves at least partly non-rational; they are the equivalent in Christian unity discussions of the "unconsci-

ous mind" in modern psychology — the deep resources of personality beyond and beneath the rational areas of persons, deeply affecting how we see and feel the world, and how we respond to it—the six-sevenths of the iceberg which is below the surface, but which decides in what direction the whole berg will move, by its responses to the currents about it.

Professor C. H. Dodd was the first to point out, from his nearly forty years in eceumenical conferences, the recurring phenomenon,

"How, when certain issues had been patiently thrashed out and some real measure of agreement was in sight, suddenly some fresh point of division would emerge to shift the debate and throw the discussion back to the beginning. The real reasons for this, he believes, may be unavowed or subconscious, but they can and do prevent a 'following (of) the argument withersoever it leads.' " (1)

It is these "unavowed or subconscious reasons" with which we want to deal now.

I

Most basic of all, I believe, is **our fundamental tendency to assume that our problems are all fundamentally doctrinal, open to logical, reasoned, intelligent verbalization and discussion and (presumably) settlement.** I would call this the **"rationalistic"** factor, though it really is not rational at all, but rather **psychological.** And I believe that it roots in two psychological predispositions.

The first of these is our **unwillingness** to admit that we do things for non-rational reasons—a matter familiar to anyone who has done any counseling. It simply is not **respectable** in American life to admit that much of what we do we do **not** because we have carefully figured out all the pros and cons on it, in a calm, cool, collected, rational manner, but because any one of a hundred subtle psychological factors in the situation triggered unconscious responses. To use one of Vance Packard's examples in **The Hidden Persuaders,** Buick dealers in certain parts of town (namely, the areas where The Hidden Persuaders would either have been read or talked about) no longer use the slinky red convertible in their show-windows, with its "mistress" connotations as developed by the motivational-research men; and the dealers have **stopped** using it because the "knowledgeable" man who now buys a red convertible would be admitting that he had been "reached" by subtle physchological factors beyond his control. Even the most blatantly manipulative psychological tricks in advertising must somehow preserve the impression that they are really rational, because most of us can't stand to admit that we don't control our own motives.

The second reason why I believe we are under great psychological pressure to behave as if all our disagreements and disunity are fundamentally doctrinal is that we are aware that **many** of the "non-theological factors" are pretty clearly **sinful.** And it is much easier and more satisfying to **justify** our divisions as the result of doctrinal divergence by the "other side", than it is to face up to our mutual sinfulness and human cussedness.

II

This "rationalistic" tendency operates even in our handling of the Scriptures. For if there is anything certain, it is that the Scriptures make clear that most divisions originate **not** in mistaken doctrine, but in sociological and psychological factors. I will mention only a few illustrative examples.

The Rich Young Ruler turned away from Jesus, not because he was unconvinced that he should follow, but because "he had much goods". The Gospel writers note the influence of position and wealth on men's response to Christ, particularly in the case of

(See footnotes on page 128)

the priests and the Sadducees. John notes the clear logic of the man born blind, being examined before the Pharisees, "Never since the world began has it been heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing,"; and he notes also the Pharisees' repudiation of the logical conclusion, because they were operating on the basis of non-logical decisions already made, namely, " . . . we know this man is a sinner."

The first problem in the infant church's life was not doctrinal, but a practical division, over the supposed discrimination against the Hellenistic Jewish widows in the relief distributions at Jersualem. Peter's withdrawal from Gentile table-fellowship at Antioch is clearly the result of social-psychological pressure on an impulsive man. Acts 13 says specifically that the reaction of the Jewish hearers of Paul at Perga, originally quite favorable, went sour on the second Sabbath, because they saw almost the whole city (of Gentiles) gathered together to hear the word of God, and they were filled with **jealousy.** Acts 19 notes the **economic** motives behind the attacks on "The Way", at Ephesus, by the silversmiths. And Paul's letters to Corinth make perfectly clear the reasons for much of the division in the Church there, which were only in a very secondary sense doctrinal, but were primarily the result of **personal attachments.**

The evidence is so clear that Alexander Campbell, in his **Christian System** essay on "Heresy", first decides that in the New Testament "heresy" "never relates to doctrine, tenet, opinion, or faith", and then concludes that "The philosophy of the whole matter, then, is, that separation is the effect of alienation of heart, alienation the fruit of rival attachements, which in the church generally begin in personal sympathies or personal antipathies, and end in detaching the subjects of them from the body of Christ." (2)

But when Campbell proposes a little later that "while endeavoring to abolish the old sects " . . . we form not a new one", he slips back into the old rationalistic fallacy, saying, "This may be done by either adding to, or subtracting from, the apostolic constitution a single item." (3)

In a larger sense, also, the viewpoint, attitude, and approach of Christian Churches to the Scriptures is itself a "rational" one. Dean Blackemore tells of a group of Disciples Divinity House students arguing at lunch one day about viewpoints on the Scriptures, noting that there were "conservative" and "liberal" viewpoints among Disciples, when a Southern Presbyterian seminarian at the same table leaned over and floored them all with the comment, "When it comes to the Scriptures, **all** Disciples are liberal", by which he meant that all the spiritual descendants of Alexander Campbell share a viewpoint on the Scripture which is clearly affected by the early nineteenth-century philosophical background and frontier spirit which he shared, which can only be called "liberal" when it is contrasted with the scholastic viewpoint of Lutherans and Calvinists.

The clearest indication of the hold which this viewpoint has on us is that, despite all our sweeping proposals to "restore the New Testament Church", we apparently never did ask the most crucial question of all, namely:

"How do we restore the New Testament materials to the place which they held and the function they served in the New Testament Church?"

This would seem to me to be the most crucial, fundamental, absolutely basic question we could ask: but it is seldom if ever broached among us. Is there not significance to the fact that we apparently never even recognized that there was a question here to be asked? Or did we just assume that everyone knew the answer, and that it would be the answer we gave?

## III

The third set of sociological and psychological factors in our division is focused around our attitude toward the Church. Notice that I didn't say, "our doctrine of the Church"; because our relation to the Church is much more complex than our **ideas** about it—being rather a basic attitude, a **commitment** which involves much deeper areas of life than just the intellect.

This attitude, this stance, this "feeling for" the Church among Disciples I would like to describe by the word "docetic," using it by analogy from its original meaning, which described a sort of Gnosticism which, because it denied that God could really become involved with matter, denied "that the incarnation and the true human life of Christ ever took place at all," (4) and so held that "it was a mere phantom that hung upon the cross." (5) For it seems to me that Disciples are too easily inclined to a view of the Church, and an attitude toward it, which makes it essentially non-human, non-historical, non-passable, non-fallible, just as the Docetics held that Christ could not **really** become involved in genuine human life, nor in genuine participation in the experience of human beings. We have not been blind to the specific failings of the leaders and people of the First Christian Church in Peculiar, Missouri, (there really is such a town, though it has no Christian Church) but we cannot (any more than the Roman Catholics) allow that **the Church** makes mistakes, that it is **essentially** participant in human life, that it is **genuinely** involved in human nature. For us the Church is a sort of perfect and eternal Platonic Idea, of which the church as we know it is only an imperfect and finite shadow. Just as the Docetics could not allow that the Son of God could really get sweat on his brow, mud between his toes, and dirt on his neck, so we find it almost impossible to **feel** that the Church can be anything but the perfect and timeless pattern of the New Testament Church, eternal in the heavens; and all the sweat and grime and mistakes of the **churches** are laid down to the failings of human nature, forgetting that it is precisely our human nature which God has decided to use to make His Church. And I am convinced that this attitude, this "docetic ecclesiology," is much more an **aesthetic feeling** than it is a doctrinal formulation—that it is a fundamental psychological pre-disposition than a logical and rational theological statement.

As I have read and re-read H. Richard Niebuhr's book, **The Social Sources of Denominationalism,** this fall, I have realized that with the possible exception of his chapter on "The Churches of the Immigrants," practically every obstacle to Christian unity which he has catalogued has played some part either in the separation of Christian Churches from the rest of the Christian world, or in our own internal schisms and divisions. Included would be: tensions caused by the original and later-developing differences in social strata; differences in temperaments of the leaders; differences in the religious background and expectations of the various groups to which we diffused ourselves; the mutual interplay of religious and political differences; regionalism — both North-South and East-West; a variety of influences from those immigrant groups which were partly attracted to our movement; our relative lack of effective evangelism both with later immigrants and with Negroes; the strains of rural fundamentalism and urban "'modernism;" the carry-over of slogans and feelings and alignments from one generation & context into another in which they really make no **sense** at at all; and finally, the desires to keep our puddle small so that we frogs will seem to be relatively larger.

I believe that much of our inability

to come to effective grips with the **dis**-unity of the Church is the result of our fundamental disposition to leave "the Church" as the spotless bride of Christ in the heavens, while we dismiss as the failings of men the real, live, genuine stresses and strains of the Church here on earth. We don't really allow that "the Church" can be involved in human struggles and the non-theological elements of human life, so we are as helpless as a Christian Science practicioner in the presence of a case of typhoid fever, when it comes to doing something about the dis-unity of the Church, for most of the Church's dis-unity roots in these non-rational depths of human life.

Only such attitudes and feelings could have brought us, for instance, to the sublime egotism with which we have considered ourselves as "the Church of Christ," while seeing all other Christians as "the denominations." Last fall, I sat in a meeting of the Catholic Community Library Association of Kansas City, listening to a Sister of Social Service review Gregory Baum's book, **That They All May Be One,** a recent, widely-praised review of papal doctrine on the "dissident churches," by a German-born Augustinian monk, now teaching in Canada. The mood and attitude of the book was sympathetic, conciliatory, perceptive, but there was a strangely familiar twang to it, somehow. It was not until later that afternoon that it finally dawned on me that the author's calm, confident assumption that his was "the one true Church of Christ, to which all the other dissident Christians need to return," expressed in the most genuinely compassionate Biblical language, could have been substituted, almost paragraph by paragraph, for sections of Alexander Campbell's **Christian System,** which I had been reading that morning. And I recalled the story of the two mental hospital patients who were discovered in serious argument: the one, under the delusion that he was Jesus Christ, was announcing that the Father had told Him that He was to be the Savior of the world, while the other patient kept insisting that **he** had not told him **anything** of the sort.

## IV

A fourth set of sociological and psychological factors in our disunity are grouped around the word "restoration."

The fact that the word and its implications as used by our early movement were heavily involved in the contemporary philosophical situation, and that that situation no longer prevails, is only part of the story. Certainly we need to do much more critical study of this term's usage in our movement: and especially we need to do historical-linguistic-theological-philosophical-critical studies on the word in the Scriptures. But for 99 per cent of our people, the critical studies will never mean a thing. Their response to the word is almost entirely a matter of sociological and psychological conditioning, quite apart from its Biblical or early-nineteenth century meanings. As might be expected, its meaning is highly ambiguous, emotionally loaded, and therefore all the more effective as a means of unity for those who think they are using it for the same purposes, and as a mark of **dis**unity for those who are on different sides.

At least five possible meanings of the phrase "restoration of the New Testament Church" are apparent to me, and there may be others which my particular sociological and psychological background keep me from seeing. These are:

(1) The Church in which the New Testament was written.

(2) The Church in which the New Testament materials were originally used.

(3) The period of the Church's existence up to the time the New Testa-

ment materials were completed in writing.

(4) The Church which determined the canon of the New Testament.

(5) The Church which is supposedly discernible as "ideal form" in the New Testament materials.

A moment's thought makes clear that the first four of these "New Testament Churches" are historical entities, which can never be "restored" unless we can re-create history. The last one of them has **never** existed as an historical entity, so cannot now be "restored," at least as an historical entity. But this ambiguity in meaning, and this **im**possibility of the "restoration of the New Testament Church," while quite apparent to me, are just **not** apparent to many of our leaders and members; and I am convinced that the obviousness of the **im**possibility to **me,** and the obviousness of the **poss**ibility to **them,** are as much or more **sociological** and **psychological** matters as they are logical or theological. And even if several of us are able, critically, to analyze carefully the concept and its Biblical and philosophical meanings, this will not make any practical difference to most of our people anyway, since their original attachment to or disillusionment with the idea of "restoration" was not a **rational** decision anyway, but rather a decision made on the basis of personal loyalty, emotional response, and other quite subtle psychological factors.

## V

The fifth set of psychological and sociological factors in our disunity cluster around what I would like to call "the laissez-faire attitude toward Christian unity." By this I mean the widespread and subtle notion, which has, I believe, been unwittingly carried over from certain notions in political economy, that unity is a sort of passive state in which we are not actively at war with one another, a sort of tasteless vanilla left over when we've taken out all the flavors of variety. This assumption, and all the emotional tendencies which go with it, is trained into our feelings, our habits of reaction, as well as our outlook on the Christian world. You know what I mean—the casual, unformulated, uncriticized unwitting assumption that any move toward unity will be a leveling-out, a thinning-down, a blurring-together, a subtle dissipation of the variety of Christian experience and expression.

I believe, on the contrary, that we must re-educate ourselves and our people, so that to the very marrow of our bones we are convinced and expectant and eager for a Christian unity which, struggling against the recurrent divisions which rear their hydra-heads in the Church, will know unity to be a vital, dynamic, creative coming-into-existence, continually renewed, never safe, always being reconceived and re-construed, against the ubiquitous forces of division. We must come to expect unity as G. K. Chesterton knew happiness, when he wrote,

"The perfect happiness of men on earth (if it ever comes) will not be a flat and solid thing, like the satisfaction of animals. It will be an exact and perilous balance, like that of a desperate romance." (6)

## CONCLUSION

Having reviewed these five constellations of sociological and psychological factors, perhaps we can make some suggestions about "what we can do about them."

**First:** we must become increasingly informed, **critically** informed, about the factors and their effects. Neibuhr's **The Social Sources of Denominationalism** is an eye-opener, as are the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order studies on "non-theological factors." Why couldn't Disciples take the lead in developing a series of re-prints

and original publiciations in this field, as partial penance for our previous unwillingness to take these factors seriously?

**Second:** we must **be together** in every possible opportunity simply to get acquainted, or re-acquainted, with each other. It is now forty years since the beginnings of our latest split, and a whole generation has grown up on each side ignorant of the other. And these must be more than **"talk"** get-togethers: for only when we begin to get to deeper levels of acquaintance will the barriers to unity begin to fall. Incidentally, here is a real value of established church structure, and a weakness of our more extreme congregationalism—structure keeps us in each other's presence, at least, so that we can't forget that we exist.

**Third:** we must worship together whenever possible, and this worship should include especially opportunity for the common and specific confession of our sins in disunity .Mutual intercessory prayer should certainly be urged and developed, also.

**Fourth:** we ought to open our eyes to, and publicize well, the present diversities of viewpoint and practice in the brotherhood, and we ought to encourage further diversification, rather than each "side" of our present groupings slipping all too naturally into a uniforming effort. If we believe that Christian unity will comprise with joy a much greater variety of Christian faith and practice than any one or dozen of our present congregations exemplifies, why don't we get busy and develop that variety, where it is needed and appropriate?

**Fifth:** we can and must introduce into **all** our seminaries and other minister-training schools portions of courses on the **causes of dis-unity** among Christians, and the ways in which the minister can lead his congregation to be on guard against and overcome them.

**Sixth:** we ought to get some of our best students busy right away on the question: "Why have we not divided over some matters which have been to the rest of the Church causes of division?" Or, put another way: "Why have **we** chosen, from the hundreds of possible causes or occasions of division in the Church, the particular set of causes we have chosen?" I believe that answers to these questions, developed in terms of the sociological and psychological factors I've been speaking of here, could be amazingly useful.

**Seventh:** we ought to go ahead with "dialogue" with each other, at leadership level, analogous to the "dialogue" developing in Europe and beginning to open in this country, between local and area Roman Catholic and Protestant pastors and theologians. The suggested "Rules for the Dialogue" published in the February 17, 1960, isue of "The Christian Century," by Robert McAfee Brown, might be a good place to start.

## THE UNCERTAIN SOUND

**Lloyd Taylor**

(A paper prepared for the Third Consultation on Internal Unity of Christian Churches to be delivered Thursday, March 1, 1962.

The general topic for the paper assigned by the continuation committee was: Sociological and Psychological Factors in Our Brotherhood Problems.
—Lloyd Taylor)

To speak of psychological and sociological implications in the discussion of Christian unity is to assume that those within the church are motivated in accordance with the principles of these two behavioral sciences. To many this is an irreverent assumption. One seminary professor, for instance, wrote that the church is divine and for this reason is not bound by the explanations used for other areas of human behavior. Now I would not for a minute deny that the church is divine in its origin, its purpose and its

destiny; but, I insist that God in His good wisdom left the church in the hands of men who are limited human beings. The church is populated by people who may have the same psychological problems that people outside the church may have. Being a Christian does not assure one that he will not become psychotic any more than it assures one that he will not have appendicitis. The fact of ordination does not guarantee that a person will not develop a psychopathic personality that will create havoc in his profession. A local congregation will probably operate well within the principles described by students of group dynamics. The minister who is the leader of the congregation and/or his board chairman will probably exhibit one of the ten basic types of leadership hinted at first by Freud and described in greater detail by Fritz Redl. (1) It is with these basic assumptions about the human quality of the church constituency that I begin.

Because of the breadth of the topic and the shortness of the time I would like to limit the topic to one particular aspect, — the minister himself, and to limit further by considering briefly three implications relative to him. To a rather great extent our problem is preacher centered. If you do not believe this I challenge you to take a poll among the laymen of this city or your city. See if they are more than scarcely aware of these things we have been discussing with such fervor, conviction and authority the past several days. You will find that the layman has an unalert acceptance of what the local minister believes about unity and missions, and, for that matter, about theology. Most laymen I have visited who do seem to be aware of our differences have had more of an emotional than an intellectual basis for their views. Thus, if the minister is not the problem, he is elemental in its solution.

(See footnotes on page 128)

I

One basic sociological problem in the social structure of our institution is that we have not developed an adequate, effective professionalization. Let me assure you I use this word in its most technical sense. It has reference to the following qualities. First, it is necessary to establish minimum standards of conduct and proficiency before admission to the profession can be allowed. Second, it is required that a recognized and centrally recorded means of admission to the ranks of those with professional standards be established. Third, continual upgrading of standards within the profession is essential. Fourth, there should be recognition of achievements among the members of the profession. And fifth, there must be a means to exclude those who prove to be unworthy. This in brief compass is what the sociologist means by the term, professionalization. You can see how it could make for unity within any social institution. You know how it has done this in the medical profession, the legal profession and even among registered nurses.

However, among the churches which are related to the Restoration Movement traditionally, the very nature of our internal structure makes this process virtually impossible. There are many who rejoice in the fact that we have not even approached professionalization. I attended a meeting once where a speaker gave a most impassioned speech against recently published suggestions for ordination standards and a code of ethics. He climaxed his speech by wadding these two documents and throwing them dramatically upon the floor exclaiming, "This is what I think of such suggestions." The crowd, largely preachers from that area, cheered lustily. Actually we have as many sets of ordination standards as we have had, do have and will have boards of elders in local churches. Is it any wonder the men they mark for leadership

often give forth the uncertain sound? Of course, this is the necessary consequent of local autonomy. Other autonomous churches have the same problems. Ask any Baptist, for instance. What complicates our problem is that our purpose for existence in the first place was the unity of all believers in Christ. The more one thinks about it the more paradoxical it becomes,— created to attain unity with an institutional structure that makes the attainment of this purpose well nigh impossible.

I am not suggesting an adequate means of solving this problem. I merely wish to demonstrate what its existence within our brotherhood results in. First, we can become a catch-all for a wide variety of persons. Recently there was an article in **The Christian** entitled "Anyone Can Belong to Central Church." I would like to suggest a sequel to that article,—"Anyone Can Become An Ordained Minister in the Christian Church." All it takes is a little personal friendship with a few local elders who seem to be embarrassed to form an examining committee and who never expect to follow the professional course of the one they so easily launched. How many revocations of ordinations have you heard of recently?

A second problem is that there is no effective way to exclude those who prove unworthy. Some consider it downright unbrotherly not to give a good recommendation. I know of one man who was hired on the basis of the fact that certain of his fellow ministers had written to the board warning them about him and what he had done. The board said they did not want anyone meddling in their business. Six months later they realized how unwise they had been but it was too late; the church was hopelessly split. I know another man who has split every church where he has preached. Today he is a right-wing radio preacher and politician. He repudiates everything about his association with the Christian Church except his ordination which he exploits for all it is worth. Do you see how this contributes to disunity?

A third problem arising from our weakness at this point is that many laymen know that other professions police their ranks. They often suppose that the ministry does also. Thus church boards and pulpit committees naively accept persons upon the fact that they are ordained. They know that if they go to a doctor, he has met the approval of the local medical association. If they go to a lawyer they know that he is accepted by the local bar association. Too often they make the same assuption about the minister they hire.

In summary, admitting the man to the ministry is a problem of the local elders. They may examine him before the formal ordination. But, once the man is admitted, he has virtually a free range and is accountable only to himself. There is no other police organization. Too easily he abuses the privilege and responsibility of that liberty. The way his society is organized has no solution for his indiscretions and partisan acts.

II

From this sociological impasse can easily emerge a second problem which I believe is causative of much disunity among us. I refer to the psychological problem of the influence of the authoritarian personality. This personality syndrome has been described by Adorno and others in a recent book bearing that title. (2)

This type of personality is not limited to the ministry. It may exist where any degree of leadership may be exerted. Here, in brief, are some of its characteristics. First, great concern with authority relationships with people; extreme deference to superior authority, and exercise of one's authority over those in subordinate positions. Two, heavy stress on conven-

tional behavior, values and morality; close conformity to group norms. Three, overcontrol and denial of one's own immoral impulses and feelings, and projections of these onto the outgroup; exaggerated sense of own moral rightness, lack of self insight. Four, depersonalization of social relations; tendency to manipulate and exploit people as objects rather than treating them as human beings, and an expectation of being exploited in return; sadistic tendencies (enjoyment in hurting other people) together with masochistic tendencies (enjoyment of being hurt). And five, rigidity of thought processes; excessive stereotyped thinking; prejudice and intolerance toward other groups. This is the authoritarian personality. (3)

This type of person does not seek unity with others. He feeds upon disunity and discord. Those who disagree with him make him think he is right. The whole world is either black or white and he is its interpreter. He builds his own little kingdom. His appeal is to the sureness of himself, the rightness of his cause, the sense of pity he arouses by his descriptions of martyrdom, and the stereotyped way he describes others with whom he does not agree. Adorno goes so far as to suggest that this person is an incipient schizoid with paranoic tendencies. A locally autonomous church is a natural spawning bed and culture for this personality type. Here, unhampered by standards other than his own, he may express himself by exploiting others of the past and present.

Does this person really exist in our brotherhood? Is he a threat to unity? Let us take some examples. An "Independent" friend of mine happened to mention the name of a minister of a rather large church. I said that I had never met him but had heard he was an "Independent." My friend smiled and said: "He is independent of the Independents. He supports just those things he wants to support. The only time he attends either national convention is when he is asked to speak." Surely he fits our description of an authoritarian. At another time I remarked to a fellow teacher that a man in his home State was one of the biggest of the "Cooperative" ministers. He said, "If you define cooperative as one whose church contributes to the Unified Promotion then he is a cooperative. But this is the only way he or any people in his church cooperate. And I do mean **his** church." He went on to mention many of the same characteristics of this minister that were so similar to those of the "Independent" preacher.

It is this type of personality that has contributed to the proliferation of sects, cults and schisms. Among more rigidly organized denominations they may be recognized and isolated. In this isolation they starve, form powerful splinter groups such as the Circuit Riders among the Methodists, or join with all outward selfrighteousness some autonomous group. With our loose and local organization they may have open season on any congregation where by personal charm and influence they may get a hearing and build an inner circle of friends. They may preach about unity but their plan is monolithic by design and authoritarian by character. They may be strong in their doctrinal preaching but often their doctrine is a selective facade behind which they hide their true desires and intent. They may call often for repentance but find little of it in themselves for they are convinced of their own rightness.

I submit to you that the emergence of this type of personality in positions of leadership among us made possible by our social structure has contributed much to our problem of disunity. What is more, because this person thrives on discord and exclusiveness the prospects for unity of action seem

dim. Because this person is sure of his own rightness and is actually encouraged by the wrongness of his enemies, there is not even a foundation for penitence which is a necessary prelude for forging bonds of Christian love. The situation is not entirely hopeless but we must always live with the expectation of dissident voices speaking often much louder than their size or importance warrants.

III

A third factor, psychological in nature, enters at this point. This is the expression of the doctrinnaire attitude. An attitude is a person's characteristic out-look on life. The doctrinnaire attitude is both common and disruptive of the particular society where it is found.

A good example of this attitude may be found in the last days of President Hoover's term of office. He was convinced that his economic interpretation of the American way was correct. Any deviation from his view he looked upon as a movement into error and disaster. When Franklin Roosevelt was elected Mr. Hoover became convinced that the country was doomed. He wrote panic letters to friends. He rode in stony silence in the inauguration parade suffering much inside. Arthur Schlesinger, Junior, writing of this described the attitude of Mr. Hoover. Every difference with himself was a difference in kind not in degree. Every change was a change in principle not merely a change in tactics. We see the same attitude today in many who believe there is only one kind of patriotic American and that is a person who believes exactly as he does; anyone who differs is un-American to the degree that he does differ. It is not mere coincidence that many of the present super-patriots are also steadfast fundamentalists; a doctrinnaire attitude is essential to both positions.

We might well ask how this attitude influences our urge to unity. The doctrinnaire firmly believes there is only one basis of unity. He believes his way is absolutely right. Any person who differs with him he sees as a person of a different kind rather than one who differs in degree. Anyone who has another system of action is looked upon as one who is obeying deviant principles rather than merely following different tactics. He himself becomes the standard by which he measures others. The Apostle Paul wrote of this when he said: "Every man ought to test his own work, and then whatever satisfaction he has will be with reference to himself, and not in comparison with someone else. For everyone will have to carry his own load" (Galatians 6:4, 5, Smith-Goodspeed).

Let us bring this argument to a significant point. What are the arguments about how missionary work should be done? Are they questions of tactics or principles? The answer is to be found in the result. If the mission convert by both methods is a Christian then by necessity the answer is that we are arguing tactics not principles. Because we are arguing tactics by what right has one side to question or condemn the other? If the mission convert is a Christian by both methods of mission work then he differs not in kind but merely in degree. Because he does differ only in degree how can one side selfrighteously condemn the other?

Let us be even more personal. Most of us can see what division can do to members of a local church or members of a church board. From our position of omniscient observers we see both sides of the situation. We often say of such conflicts: "Why can't they see that their differences really are not so great? Why can't they see that

petty jealousies and misunderstandings have been inflated beyond their degree of importance? Why can't they see what they are doing to the local program by their unchanging, uncharitable attitudes?" Somehow, we can see this in others but too often our strong doctrinnaire spirit will not allow us to see it in ourselves. How often must God have said of us what we have said of those in our congregations.

The main thesis of this presentation has been that the minister is a key person in our search for internal unity. Our policy of autonomy, often nonfunctioning or malfunctioning, has created the problem of a heterogeneous ministry. This ministry may be entered by ambitious persons with authoritarian personalities who can turn churches and/or organizations to their own purposes. Often this ministry may become obsessed with a doctrinnaire spirit which confuses tactics with principles. These are the risks of autonomy.

Chaplain Carl Boyd tells the story of a small girl who asked her father if she could cut the pictures out of her story book. He reminded her how much she liked her book. When she persisted, however, the father said: "It is your book. Do with it as you like." Gleefully she clipped pictures until the book was ruined. The next night she cried bitterly because she had no book to look at. Her father reminded her that she herself had decided to cut it apart. In a sobbing response she asked, "Yes, Daddy, but why did **You** let me do it?" Perhaps the mournful wail we make as we contemplate a torn and divided body that once called others to unity but now severed by unwise use of autonomy will be, "God, why did You let us do it?" None-the-less **we** did it.

## EVALUATION AND SUMMATION
### of the
## INTERNAL UNITY CONSULTATION

**February, 1962**

**Tulsa, Oklahoma**

**by**

**Dr. Jesse M. Bader,**

**New York, N. Y.**

**Introduction of Dr. Bader by**

**Dr. Charles R. Gresham:**

In our planning session at Lake Carl Blackwell we, as a group, decided that one very interesting and helpful feature of our Consultation would be to have some person come and be as much of an official observer as this unofficial gathering can make him; to be with us throughout the discussions, presentations, the fellowship; and, then, at the last session to give us a summation and analysis as to the value of what is taking place and what this may point toward as far as future prospects are concerned. As we discussed whom we might select to do this, the name of Dr. Jesse Bader came up. Dr. Bader has been, for years, one of the great leaders in this movement of ours; has served not only what we might call cooperative agency life, but interdenominational life; and, at this time, is the Executive-Secretary of the World Convention of Churches of Christ. We felt that his analysis and observations would certainly be worthwhile and that we could learn and profit much by what he had to say. So at this time I present Dr. Bader, who will bring this analysis to us.

**Dr. Bader**

Dr. Gresham, my brethren and friends: There are three things I have often said I never wanted to be. One is the front pew in a Christian Church. The second is the third verse in a Christian Church hymnbook, and the third is to be the last speaker on a Convention Program. This is the last session and I'm the last speaker on

the program of this Internal Unity Consultation. While there are a few who have already left for home, yet there are many who are still here.

My friend Dr. Gresham has introduced me differently from the way I was introduced in Great Britain in 1958. I was introduced by a layman in Birmingham. As he looked at me, he said to the congregation, "This man was over here first in 1926. I saw him then. After 32 years, I look at him now and he looks just the same. He seems to have just as much energy; he looks just as young, and he seems to have the same enthusiasm. However, I note this difference: there is less wave and more beach."

I appreciate so much the invitation of the Program Committee to bring an evaluation and summation of this Internal Unity Consultation, concerning what we have seen, heard and felt during these hours together.

**First,** may I observe that we have listened to and participated in a well prepared program. The Program Committee deserves our thanks. I have not sat through any program anywhere for a long time when I felt that there was more meticulous care given to its preparation than has been given to this one. The speakers have presented splendidly prepared addresses.

**Second,** this Internal Unity Consultation has brought so many of us together and from long distances. Here we have met old friends and made new ones. We have enjoyed a rich fellowship one with another.

**Third,** I observe that during these hours together there is a unity and an understanding among us all that is most heartening. I find it hopeful for the future. I feel that all of us have been able to get different points of view as we have listened to the speakers. The Psalmist of old said, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." I am sure that all of us would agree that if any Brotherhood ought to be united it is ours. We who preach unity should practice it. Others take notice of us in our local communities across America and around the world.

I note with interest and appreciation that all here present have a common concern for our unity. Each person present is eager for a new day when all of us shall catch step together and move forward as one body.

One of the difficulties has been that up until the past few years no group or agency among us has done anything much to bridge the chasms or heal the divisions among us. Very little time and very few dollars have been spent in behalf of our internal unity. One of our speakers has well said, "We have been a long time getting this chasm between us. It may take a long time to bridge this chasm."

**Fourth,** during these days together it is very evident that our agreements far outnumber our disagreements. One of the things I have noted and that is that we are able to talk about our disagreements without being disagreeable. We have been in agreement concerning our common history and heritage, and also we have been concerned about our destiny.

**Fifth,** it has been evident in all the addresses and in our discussions that we are one with reference to the Lordship of Christ. He has been given a central place. All have sought to lift up Jesus Christ during this consultation. No one has minimized his place in the Church and in the life of our Brotherhood.

**Sixth,** I noted that much has been said about the Church, the Body of Christ. We have had a helpful discussion concerning autonomy of the local church and its responsibilities. Also, there was a helpful discussion concerning the cooperation of local churches in getting the larger things

done for Christ in missions and evangelism.

**Seventh,** the place and nature of Christian fellowship was in our thinking during the program. This **Kiononia,** the Greek word for **fellowship,** was stressed constantly. I John 1 has much to say about fellowship, particularly the vertical dimension of it, for he says, "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." The horizontal fellowship is there also. It begins on the local church level but it does not end there. It widens until it includes fellow-Christians to the ends of the earth.

**Eighth,** I have noted all through the Consultation that without exception in the address and in speaking with you personally, that there was a note of sadness concerning the divisions among us. No one is happy about them. All of us deplore them. I have detected a wistful longing for unity, harmony and fellowship that should characterize our great Brotherhood.

**Ninth,** I have noted that there have been a number of references to the Ecumenical Movement which is on in the world at the present time. I like to think that Thomas Campbell had a lot to do with the modern Ecumenical Movement as we know it today. He hoped to start it by writing the **Declaration and Address** in 1809. As I have sat here with you during the program, I have thought about him and this great document he gave us. I have been wondering whether or not Thomas Campbell, had he been living with us now, would have written the Declaration and Address in the same way as he wrote it in 1809. Would he not have rejoiced concerning the organization of the American Bible Society in 1816; the organization of Christian Endeavor in the latter part of the nineteenth century; the organization of 1100 city, county and State Councils of Churches from 1908-1962; the formation of the National Council in 1950; and the organization of the World Council in 1948. I leave this question with you to answer.

**Tenth,** may I be priveleged to make some suggestions. I hope other Internal Unity Consultations such as this one will be held. I feel that at least a part of the solution to our divisions lies in this direction. Also, I hope when we leave from here we will not pin labels on each other. Personally, as far as I am concerned, I am not going to think of any of you as "independent" or "cooperative." I expect to think of each of you as my Christian brother. Also, each of us can do much in our local communities among our ministers and churches to bring about this larger unity and fellowship among us. I am concerned with you that we do all we can to help answer the High Priestly prayer of Christ our Lord, "that they may all be one." Unity within the Church is in the will of God.

I was in a preaching mission in San Francisco in 1936. On that date the Golden Gate Bridge was dedicated. It was November 11. The engineer showed me a sample of the cable that was holding up the bridge. He said, as he showed me the cable, "This cable is made out of 17,500 wires. Each wire has a tensile strength sufficient to hold up a Ford car. Of course no one wire can hold up the bridge, but all the wires working together are holding up the bridge and will carry the traffic through the years." And it is not what any one church in a local community can do that will make much of a dent on that community, but it is what the churches of our brotherhood do together that is going to make an impact.

Some of you knew Hal Luccock, professor at Yale; others of you have read his books. I remember an illustration in one of his lectures that I heard him give. He said the situation today is a good deal like that explained in the Old Testament, where the people came to the Jordan River. Be-

cause they could not pronounce a word properly they were slain. He said to us, "Gentlemen, the one word we have all got to learn to pronounce and to pronounce clearly is that little word with two letters 'we'." I hope that that will be our spirit as we go out from this Consultation.

## REPORT ON THE THIRD CONSULTATION ON INTERNAL UNITY OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES TULSA, OKLAHOMA, 1962

There were 178 registered delegates, though attendance at some sessions (evenings) was in excess of 300.

As before, the delegates represented a good cross section of viewpoint, though there were more "independents" registered than "cooperatives" (about 65-35). However, many of those who were classified as "independent" accept the term with reluctance and consider themselves as unclassifiable with regard to such issues.

The following states were represented: Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Colorado.

Ninety-five returned questionaires evaluating the meeting. Almost all desired that such consultations continue because they were helpful. A few qualified this desire by specifying the type of meeting. Fifteen wanted mass meetings only, two wanted invitational - small group consultations only. All the rest desired a combination of the two, either on the same year or alternate years. Most of those who desired mass meeting only were "independent," the two who desired invitational meeting only were divided one each, "cooperative" and "independent."

The following persons were named most frequently for the continuation committee:

James B. Carr, Chairman
George Earl Owen
Donald West
Robert Fife
Woodrow Phillips
Hugh Holland
Charles Gresham
Sheldon Elliot, Treasurer
Seth Wilson
Martin Mitchum
Thomas Parish

**The following was the questionaire used to make this evaluation:**

YOUR NAME .....

YOUR CITY .....

PLEASE GIVE YOUR PERSONAL REACTION TO THIS CONSULTATION:

1. Do you think this consultation was worthwhile?
2. Do you think another consultation should be held?
3. Do you think such meetings have or will aid mutual understanding?
4. Which type of meeting do you consider most fruitful?

   (a) Invitational consultations of smaller groups ————————.

   (b) Mass meetings such as this ————————.

   (c) A combination of each ————————.

   (d) Other ————————.

5. How would you evaluate the attitudes of those who attended the mass meetings?
6. How would you evaluate the attitudes of those who participated in the discussion groups?
7. Is there any evidence of a real desire for a united brotherhood?
8. If you think these consultations should be continued, please list below the following:
   (a) Names of persons who should serve on planning committee.
   (b) Suggested dates and places.
   (c) Suggested topics of discussion and study.

## PARTICIPANTS AND COMMITTEES

W. Carl Ketcherside, editor of the **Missionary Messenger,** St. Louis, Missouri.
James B. Carr, professor of Christian Doctrine, Manhattan Bible College, Manhattan, Kansas.
Woodrow Phillips, professor of Missions, Ozark Bible College, Joplin, Missouri.
Donald West, United Christian Missionary Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.
George Earl Owen, United Christian Missionary Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.
Robert O. Fife, Professor of History, Milligan College, Tennessee.
Fred Thompson, Jr., Minister, First Christian Church, Chicago, Illinois.
W. B. Blakemore, Dean, Disciples Divinity House, Chicago, Illinois.
Henry E. Hill, Minister, West Side Christian Church, Wichita, Kansas.
Charles F. Arnold, Minister, Mohawk Park Christian Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma.
A. T. DeGroot, professor of Church History, Brite College of the Bible, Ft. Worth, Texas.
Dean E. Walker, President, Milligan College, Tenessee.
Wayne Reinhardt, Minister, Park Hill Christian Church, Parkville, Missouri.
Lloyd Taylor, Professor of Sociology, Phillips University, Enid, Oklahoma.
Jesse Bader, General Secretary, World Convention of Churches of Christ, New York.

## DISCUSSION GROUP LEADERS

David Reece, Chapel Hill Christian, Tulsa
Ivan Hansen, Forty-First St. Christian, Tulsa
Bob Peake, Harvard Ave. Christian, Tulsa
Bill Malotte
James Fleming
Paul E. Walker, First Christian, Coweta, Oklahoma
Dewey Thackston, East Tulsa Christian, Tulsa
Howard Dobbs, East Point Christian, Muskogee, Oklahoma
Ronald Epps, First Christian, Cleveland, Oklahoma
LeRoy Veale, Highland Park Christian, Tulsa

## COMMITTEE ON ARRANGEMENTS

Hugh T. Holland, Wheeling Ave. Christian Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma—Local Chairman
James B. Carr, Manhattan Bible College—Co-Chairman
Wayne Reinhardt, Parkville, Mo.—Co-Chairman
Sheldon Elliott, Bartlesville, Oklahoma—Treasurer
Charles Gresham, Manhattan Bible College—Publication Editor

## LOCAL COMMITTEES

Music—David Williams, First Christian, Tulsa
David Barger, Cincinnati Avenue Christian, Tulsa
Housing—Paul McBride, East Side Christian, Tulsa
LeRoy Veale, Highland Park Christian, Tulsa
Publicity—Charles F. Arnold, Mohawk Park Christian, Tulsa
Roy Blackmore, East Tulsa Christian, Tulsa
Registration—Sloan Gentry, First Christian, Tulsa
James Garrett—Bellaire Christian, Tulsa

## PROGRAM
## THIRD CONSULTATION ON INTERNAL UNITY OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES
## WHEELING AVENUE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
## TULSA, OKLAHOMA
**February 27 — March 1, 1962**

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27

7:00 p.m. Worship Service, Roy Blackmore, Minister, East Tulsa Christian Church.

7:30 p.m. Bible Study, Dr. Carl Ketcherside "The Community of Saints"

8:00 p.m. Statement of Basic Issues—(Woodrow Phillips, Ozark Bible College (Don West, Foreign Div., UCMS)

9:00 p.m. Discussion groups

10:00 p.m. Dismissal

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28

8:45 a.m. Worship Service, Wm. L. Miller, Minister, Rogers Heights Christian Church

9:00 a.m. Bible Study—Dr. Carl Ketcherside

9:30 a.m. Brotherhood Restructure (Dr. George Earl Owen, Admin. UCMS (Prof. Robert Fife, Milligan College)

10:30 a.m. Discussion groups

11:45 a.m. Dismissal

1:45 p.m. Worship Service, James Garrett, Minister, Bellaire Christian Church

2:00 p.m. Bible Study, Dr. Carl Ketcherside

2:30 p.m. The problem of local autonomy relating to brotherhood unity— (Fred Thompson, Jr., Minister, First Christian Church, Chicago, Ill. Dr. Wm. Blakemore, Dean, Disciples Divinity House, Chicago, Ill.)

3:30 p.m. Discussion groups

4:30 p.m. Dismissal

5:00 p.m. Banquet—Topic: Specific issues faced by local churches: (Henry Hill, Minister, Westside Christian Church, Wichita, Kansas) (Charles Arnold, Minister, Mohawk Park Christian Church, Tulsa)

7:30 p.m. Worship Service, Loren Ryel, Minister, Memorial Christian Church, Tulsa

:00 p.m. The Nature of a United Brotherhood: (Dr. A. T. DeGroot, T.C.U. and Dr. Dean E. Walker, President, Milligan College)

9:00 p.m. Questions by a selected panel of "reactors."

10:00 p.m. Dismissal.

THURSDAY, MARCH 1

8:45 a.m. Worship Service, Robert A. Fogleman, Minister, Boulevard Christian Church, Muskogee

9:00 a.m. Bible Study, Dr. Carl Ketcherside

9:30 a.m. Business Session

10:00 a.m. Sociological and Psychological Factors in Brotherhood Problems: (Wayne Reinhardt, Park Hill Christian, Parkville, Mo.) (Prof. Lloyd Taylor, Phillips University (Sociology)

11:00 a.m. Discussion groups

12:00 Noon Dismissal

12:30 p.m. Luncheon—Summation and Evaluation—Dr. Jesse Bader, Gen. Sec. World Convention of Christian Churches.

## Footnotes

2 A very careful study of this idea, as it appears in the thought of Alenxander Campbell, is presented in **Apostle of Freedom, by** D. Ray Lindley (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1957). A paragraph in Chapter IV says: "Campbell thus appeared to seek for the congregation of believers the status of what McDougal calls the 'deliberative group.' Just as McDougall affirms that in a deliberative group it is possible for the group thought to result in a decision and an action 'higher than that which its best minds, independently could have achieved,' Campbell said that he had often been led, not only to reconsider, but to abandon some of his former conclusions, 'on suggestions and objections made by those whose education and capacity might be regarded as of a very humble rank.' Such group action, he said, sought not simply the communication of knowledge, nor the execution of a program but 'the proper development 'and direction of the human powers.'" An earlier student noted this crucial idea thus: "Campbell falls back upon a principle which is uniquely his own, his unswerving faith in the correct judgments of the enlightened common mind. In a word, the majority of those who love the Lord must always decide such questions, and the minority, as in all social compacts, must quietly bow to its will." 'Jesse Kellems, **Alexander Campbell and the Disciples,** (New York: R. R. Smith, 1930,)

(3) "We could nullify our message for the unity of the whole church by setting the seal of official sanction upon some set of theological formulations which would be supposed to 'tell the world where we stand' doctrinally. Beyond the affirmation of loyalty to Christ and the acceptance of his lordship as the bond of unity among Christians, nobody can tell the world where we stand, because we do not all stand on the same theological ground. There is almost as much theological diversification among Disciples as there is in the whole body of American Protestantism. This diversification has tended to increase as more and more Disciples have emerged from the state of theological naivete which characterized our leaders in earlier days, and it will probably increase still more in the future. This gives Disciples an unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate to the world by a concrete example that it is possible for a wide variety of doctrinal views to coexist peacefully and fraternally within one fellowship of Christians. Our central thesis is that this kind of unity with freedom and diversity can be projected on a larger scale which will include all Christians, and that no other kind of unity is either possible or desirable. Meanwhile, as to where we stand, let us stand on a platform as broad as that upon which we think a united church ought to stand." W. E. Garrison, **Heritage and Destiny** (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1961), p. 153.

(1) No footnotes supplied with Reinhardt's Manuscript.

Taylor Footnotes

1. See Hare, Borgatta and Bales. **Small Groups.** New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955, pp. 71.

2. T. W. Adorno and others. **The Authoritarian Personality.** New York: Harper Brothers, 1950.

3. This brief summary taken largely from Krech and Cruitchfield. **Elements of Psychology. New York:** Alfred A. Knopf, 1960.

Fife Footnotes

4. Page 44.
5 6 and 7. Emphasis mine.
8. See page 40 F.
9. Page 57.

10. Page 57.

11. Page 54 F.

12. See Pages 25, 67.

13. Page 68.

14. See Page 65.

15. Page 68 F.

16. Pages 62, 63.

17. Declaration and Address, P. 17.

19. See Campbell's discussion in **Christian System,** pages 172, 173.

20. It seems appropriate here to call attention to "The Authority of the Word" an address delivered by Dean E. Walker.

21. W. Robinson, **The Biblical Doctrine of the Church,** page 133.

22. **Ibid,** pages 134, 135.

23. Acts 15:22.

24. Robinson, page 134.

25. **Ibid,** pages 134, 135.

26. See **Report of the Commission on Restudy of the Disciples of Christ,** pages 26, 27.

27. Jn. 7:17.

28. See pages 19, 21, 58 F.

29. See pages 25, 44, 56.

30. See pages 25, 29, 45.

31. I Jn. 1:3.